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Christianity and Islam ... p. 12

A white man's journey into black history ..... p. 14

56th year of publication

Alpha becoming popular in Christian Reformed Churches

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COURTESY HARRY VANDERWEES.

Members of a recent Alpha course held at Covenant CRC in Winnipeg.

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The Alpha course, which started as a small ministry at an Anglican Church in London, England, has been growing by leaps and bounds, until now about thousands of courses are being offered in more than 100 countries. In Canada, many Christian Reformed churches have adopted Alpha, are using the course as an outreach or a refresher course in Christianity, and are seeing positive results.

Nicky Gumbel, assistant rector of Holy Trinity Brompton Church, in London, has developed and popularized Alpha, and is featured in a series of videotaped talks used in the course to cover topics such as: Christianity: Boring, Untrue and Irrelevant?; Who is Jesus?; and What does the Holy Spirit do? Most Alpha courses run for about 12 weeks, with each meeting consisting of a meal, one of the videos, and a small group discussion time.

Enhancing outreach

Bonnie Vrieswyk, of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, Ont., has helped to lead its Alpha course, which will soon be offered for the fourth time. She sees it as a good way to enhance her church's outreach program.

"I think it's aimed for anyone in their Christian walk," she says — from "people who have been Christians for a long time" to those who have been away from the church for awhile.

Most recently, Jubilee offered the course on Saturday mornings, which Vrieswyk says is good "for people who are very busy during the week." The course started with

See **ALPHA** *page 2...*

South Africa faces 'spiritual crisis' in 2002

Stefan J. Bos, Special Correspondent ASSIST News Service

SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA (ANS) — A Soweto based church creating jobs and social programs in townships of South Africa is urging Christians to actively support its New Year's pledge to bring "God's love" to those suffering from AIDS, poverty and disillusion.

Twelve years after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, millions of especially black South Africans have still not seen the social benefits of the post-apartheid era, suggests Rev. Msukelwa Jan Shabangu (40), Senior Pastor of Greater Love Christian Fellowship.

"While these outward signs are encouraging, levels of poverty and disempowerment are still unacceptably high,'' explains Shabangu in an interview with ASSIST News Service. He says it is time for Christians to help the outcasts who often live without hope because of AIDS, addiction or other social ills.

Shabangu's mission-oriented church, which he founded last year, is reporting an urgent need in Soweto, where thousands of squatters became homeless in January after they were evicted by police forces from their homes.

Dreams not realized

The incidents are seen as a sign of further tensions in volatile Soweto, which Shabangu describes as "an African melting pot" with up to three million impoverished people of dozens of different ethnic groups, about 20 kilometres south of Johannesburg.

It hurts Shabangu that Soweto was set up in 1904 only to become "the government's dumping ground for unwanted blacks" from the 1940s. Many homes still resemble the overcrowded first houses made of tins and wood in the city, which received its bricks in 1933.

"For many township dwellers, the pace of change in South African society is far too slow," Shabangu says. "Dreams of a good education, a reasonable job, and a chance to climb upward in life remain a pipe-dream for the majority of people."

JOHN DE VRIES

A street in Soweto, home to Nobel Prize winner Nelson Mandela.

The high rate of unemployment prompted Greater Love Christian Fellowship to establish a handcraft project which he says "provides economic sustenance to families."

The job creation program is called the Ndebele Artwork Centre, named after his own indigenous group which the pastor notes was "marginalized" under years of apartheid.

"Its arts and cultural activities were not in the public eye," he adds. However, Shabangu believes that "the abolishing of apartheid laws and the notion of free enterprise, presented an opportunity of stepping into the bright color ideology of the Ndebele nation."

He says his centre has so far created eight jobs and outsourced business to four independent companies.

Open to all ages, races

"Women, men and youth of all ages and race," can participate in the centre's activities, that include making pottery products, design of clothing and bedding making. "A white woman is owning the business of firing our pottery products," explains Shabangu.

In addition, Greater Love Christian Fellowship plans other work projects such as a laundry service, a vegetable garden to grow vegetables to feed the needy, computer training and early childhood learning programs.

See **SOWETO** *page 2...*

News

Alpha helps people renew faith, build deeper relationships

... *continued from page 1*

breakfast, and childcare was offered for those with young children.

"The teaching in the videos is very good," observes Vrieswyk. "It's really refreshing to know the basics of Christianity aren't all that complicated." She also appreciates the opportunity for church members to meet in a small group and grow closer together.

Good results she has seen from the program include: "renewed enthusiasm for one's faith, renewed joys in relationships with the Lord."

Despite Alpha's Anglican origins, Vreiswyk says it's ecumenical and "touches on things we have in common" as Christians. "God seems to have chosen to bless this particular program."

COURTESY BONNIE VRIESWYK

Bonnie Vrieswyk

Three kinds of evangelism

Philip Reinders, one of the ministers of First CRC in Calgary, says his church adopted the Alpha course because it was "looking for a way to expand our evangelistic outreach." Four years ago, Reinders went to an Alpha training conference in Vancouver, and was impressed with the program. His enthusiasm caught on with First CRC, when he started working there, and now the church is about to start its sixth Alpha session.

Unlike Jubilee, First CRC started its courses at people's homes, on Monday evenings. "That worked famously in the first year," asserts Reinders. Later, because of increased numbers, Alpha was held at the church "with less than desirable results," he observes. Now, the course is once again held in people's homes, this time on Wednesday evenings.

The course is special because of "the way Alpha combines three kinds of evangelism in one experience," says Reinders. He refers to the meal participants share together, watching the video, and the small group discussion time.

Having a meal together is "an indispensable part of the Alpha experience," contends Reinders, because of "the relationships you build through that meal.... Hospitality is a form of evangelism."

Using the videotaped talks is an advantage, because people can talk objectively about it, rather than asking the pastor to defend his own presentation.

"The teaching on the Holy Spirit is quite sound," says Reinders.

For participants, Alpha provides "a period of time in which they can consider the Christian faith," explains Reinders. "They can pose questions and challenge... A sense of community forms."

After a course finishes, most participants ask "Can we continue this group?" reports Reinders. Some of them have gone into small groups afterward.

People have become Christians through the course and have become active at the church, observes Reinders. He thinks the course appeals to a variety of churches because it deals with "some core essentials" of Christianity, and avoids denominational arguments.

Super Tuesday

Covenant CRC in Winnipeg has seen rapid growth in its Alpha program. The first course had nine people, says co-ordinator Harry Vanderwees. "Now we're on our eighth Alpha. We're up to 60 or 70 people. I'd say 40 per cent are not from our church."

Covenant decided to offer Alpha because young people were bringing friends to church "and we just could not assimilate them at all," explains Vanderwees. The church needed some way of introducing new people to the Gospel, not just to church life. Alpha filled the bill. "It's an exciting venture," he declares.

Now, Alpha is offered on Tuesday evenings at the church, as part of its "Super Tuesday" program. Other small groups and discussions are offered that same evening. Super Tuesday offers worship opportunities for people who do not worship on Sundays, explains Vanderwees.

Vanderwees especially appreciates the Alpha dinners, which allow churched and non-churched participants to get to know each other. The church tries to have a mixture of both groups of people in each course.

Vanderwees agrees with Reinders that Alpha covers the basics of Christianity very well. He thinks the course is becoming popular because "it touches the heart of the Gospel. It's the whole Acts 2 story again. People are recognizing the Holy Spirit is at work." The course is especially good for non-Christians because "it gives historical facts you can base your faith on."

Other churches in Winnipeg, including Mennonites and Baptists, have shown interest in Alpha, and have sent representatives to Covenant's Alpha course to check it out before offering it at their own churches.

Conversions every time

"We have conversions ... every time we have Alpha," asserts Jean Dykshoorn, small group co-ordinator for New Life CRC in Abbotsford, B.C. "It works." A recent course had just three participants, but all three became Christians, she reports.

New Life has offered Alpha for four years, usually on a Wednesday or Thursday evening at the church, with supper. Two reasons the church offers the course are: "We're a church that's small-group based [and] a very seeker-sensitive church," explains Dykshoorn. The course lets participants explore Christianity "in a non-threatening environment."

Dykshoorn appreciates that Alpha has "user-friendly material — very easy to be lay-led." Gumbel's teaching is "very easy to follow regardless of educational background."

Fellowship is another important aspect of the course. "Breaking of bread together helps to create community very quickly." Recently, the church offered the course with only dessert and coffee, but Dykshoorn observes, "our attendance dropped when we dropped the meal."

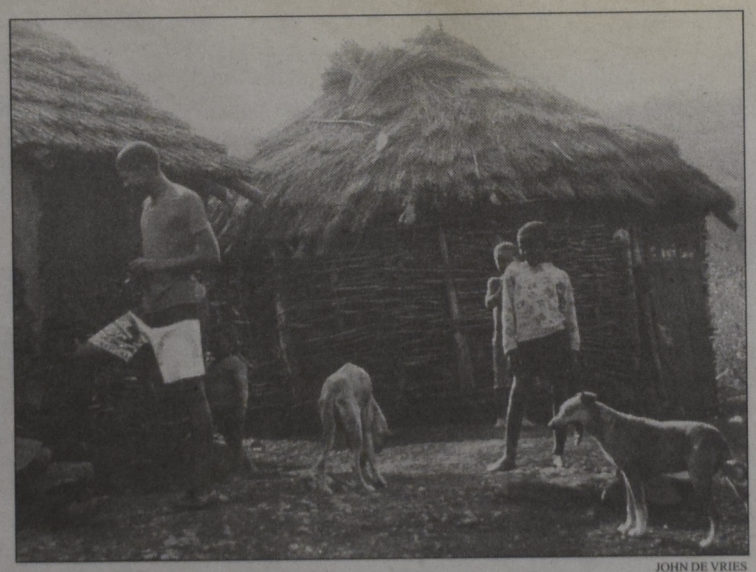
Soweto church aims to meet physical, spiritual needs

... *continued from page 1*

Shabangu was inspired by a 1997 trip to the United States, where he saw that almost every church he visited was somehow involved in community work. The pastor points out that the social programs are a vehicle to spread the Gospel.

He says his church wants "to reach people for Jesus Christ through people-oriented ministries that have the central focus on meeting the real needs." These evangelistic activities also include 'Reach out Ministries' and 'Healing Ministries'.

"Our aim for 2002 is to find an organization, a church family or an individual to partner with and fund the multi-purposed building to house our church family and its activities," explains Shabangu.



JOHN DE VRIES

Impoverished living in South Africa

Spiritual crisis

His appeal comes at a time of what is apparently an unprecedented spiritual crisis in South Africa. Shabangu suggests he has to compete with "traditional healers who see themselves as providing a helpful service to the community but who are involved in the activities of witches.

"The service provided by the 'Sangomas' is to 'smell' and detect witches and wizards in the community." He adds that such "activities often lead to conflict and violence, with suspected witches falling victim to severe mob justice."

This situation has also led to increased alcoholism, drug addiction and a high divorce rate. The pastor warns that "Satanism provides an even deeper alliance with the devil." Shabangu fears that the number of Satanists is growing "and they include a few students at local schools."

Soweto's cult groups

He is also concerned about a number of cult groups in Soweto. "With the adoption of a new constitution and under the governance of the (ruling) African National Congress, Christianity has lost its exclusive position of dominance in the country. The playing field has been leveled, with other religions enjoying new-found exposure," reports Shabangu.

"South Africa has changed from being a Christian country into a 'religious' country." However while church leaders are indicating a need for what the pastor calls "a spiritual revival," little has been done to achieve that aim. "It is generally believed that churches are not effectively influencing the township for Jesus. Most churches do not approach church growth from a strategic mindset due to limited church income, as the majority of their members are not working. The majority of pastors carry jobs on [the] side to supplement their pastoral salaries."

Yet despite these difficulties, he wants to win Soweto and other townships for Christ, with the support from his wife Nomhle and their three children. Although Shabangu (who has contacts with American and Australian Christians) believes in miracles, he makes clear his family and staff can not do the job alone.

He adds his church-ministry urgently requires daily prayer and financial support to finance the job creation program and other ministry activities. "We face an Enemy who has laid claim to Soweto," he says about the devil.

"The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work," adds Shabangu, referring to John 3:8. But he admits that "reaching Soweto for Jesus Christ is no light undertaking."

Rev. Msukelwa Jan Shabangu and his Greater Love Christian Fellowship can be reached via phone/fax: (2711) 989- 0004 or e-mail: **ndebelartwork@worldonline.co.za** ***Or write: Greater Love Christian Fellowship, P.O. Box 74 Meadowlands 1851 South Africa.***

News

Indian church leaders plead for dialogue to resolve tension with Pakistan

Anto Akkara

NEW DELHI, India (ENI) — Amid continuing tensions between India and Pakistan, Indian church leaders have warned that "war hysteria" is gripping their country and have called for dialogue to resolve differences between the two states.

The current dispute follows the storming last month of the Indian parliament complex. The Indian government claims the attack was carried out by Pakistani-backed militants.

While the Indian authorities have failed to rule out military action against Pakistan in their response to the attack, churches in India are urging their government to resolve the issue through dialogue with its neighbor.

War not a solution

"War is not a solution for the existing conflict situation between India and Pakistan," said Geevarghese mar Coorilos, president of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI).

The NCCI is the biggest ecumenical body in India, grouping 29 Orthodox and Protestant churches.

In a statement issued on January 7, mar Coorilos, the assistant metropolitan of the Orthodox Syrian church's Bombay diocese, declared that "peace can be established only by continuing dialogue at all levels."

Ipe Joseph, NCCI general secretary, told ENI: "There is a war hysteria in the country now. It has to be diffused at the earliest." He stated the council's position in favor of exerting "diplomatic pressure on Pakistan."

"India and Pakistan cannot afford another war," he told ENI, in a reference to the three wars between the two countries since they became independent in 1947.

At the heart of the tension between the two states is the unresolved issue of the state of Kashmir, in the Himalaya region. Both India and Pakistan lay claim to Kashmir, which has been divided between the two countries since 1949, at the end of the first Indo-Pakistani war.

India claims that Kashmiri separatists, backed by Pakistan, were responsible for last month's attack on the Indian parliament.

In early January, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) also urged the government "to consider all other options ... before taking the last step of going to war" after the Indian government threatened to launch its own "war against terrorism."

Asserting that the Catholic church is "fully with the government in its resolve to counter terrorism," the CBCI expressed "serious concern" about the "fallout of a war."

Cautioning that "war is in nobody's interest and there are no victors but only losers in a war," CBCI secretary general Archbishop Oswald Gracias said that "violence breeds more violence."

Christians stage peace protest

On December 25, 2001, several Christian groups joined secular organizations in a peace demonstration in the Indian capital, forming a human chain of several hundred people around New Delhi's historic India Gate.

But the demonstration was overshadowed by the mobilization of both Indian and Pakistani troops along their shared border.

The Indian government has denied access to Indian air space to Pakistan International Airlines, and has imposed restrictions on telephone calls from Kashmir, where thousands of lives were lost during the 1990s in violence involving Muslim separatists and Indian army operations.

Violence in Kashmir and along the Pakistani-Indian border have left other casualties among soldiers and civilians of both sides since the Dec. 13 attack on the Indian parliament.

Indian authorities said that a separatist militant was killed in a gunfight after a siege at a mosque in Indian-administered Kashmir. Security forces surrounded the mosque in the Kunzar area, about 40 km north of Srinagar, after militants refused to give themselves up, according to BBC reports.

The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC), which is based in the southern Indian city of Bangalore, said in a Jan. 4 statement that Christians were "deeply disturbed about this ominous pattern of events — ominous because of the devastating consequence in the near, as well as distant future."

"Suspicion and distrust among neighbors, hatred and prejudice between friends belonging to different faiths and ideologies, hatred of communities — all these could blow up the democratic and secular fabric [of India]," cautioned Sajan K George, GCIC convenor.

GHARIB HANIF (HANIF@GHARIB.DEMON.CO.UK)

A sad Kashmiri woman in a refugee camp.

Bishop appeals for end to violence in Zimbabwe

HARARE, Zimbabwe (ENI) — A Methodist bishop has made a passionate appeal to Zimbabwe's political parties and the government of President Robert Mugabe to take action to stop the continuing political violence in the country.

At a New Year's ceremony on January 7, attended by judges and senior government officials, Bishop Cephas Mukandi said: "We hear incidents of citizens of this country fighting or killing one another because of political differences. Battles have never settled a quarrel, neither will they now."

See BISHOP *page 5...*

Examining just war tradition

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

During my youth the country of my birth, the United States, was waging what would prove to be an unsuccessful war against communism in Vietnam. As I neared my eighteenth birthday, I had to determine for myself what I thought of this conflict. At the time I believed myself to be a pacifist. In my early university undergraduate years I was favorably impressed by the anabaptist revival represented by the Sojourners community and similar groups.

However, I soon came to believe that the quest for justice, if coupled with an unwillingness ever to resort to force, amounted to little more than wishful thinking. This eventually moved me towards an appreciation of the just war tradition, which has been followed by the major Christian communions, including Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed. According to this tradition, waging war is a legitimate extension of the government's divine task of doing justice, provided certain criteria are satisfied.

Just cause, right intention

First, several preconditions must be met before going to war. There must be a just cause and a right intention, and it must be declared by a legitimate political authority. A just war cannot be waged by, say, a private citizen for purposes of self-aggrandisement.

Second, there are several criteria that must be considered by the political authority in waging the war itself: probability of success, whether the good accomplished will outweigh the harm done, and whether other means short of war have been exhausted. Once a war has been declared, noncombatant populations must not be targeted.

During the Vietnam War I do not recall ever hearing discussion of just war principles or whether the American effort fulfilled them. To be sure, Lt. William Calley was prosecuted for his part in the 1968 My Lai massacre, yet many otherwise right-thinking people argued that such actions were inevitably part of a guerrilla conflict where the lines between soldiers and civilians were blurry, if not entirely nonexistent.

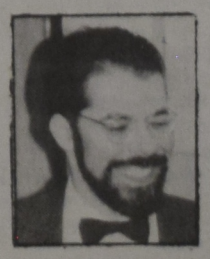
Thirty years later the tide seems to have turned for the better. Now we hear of roundtable discussions occurring every few weeks devoted to just war principles. Even the secular media, often so ready to distance themselves from anything remotely connected to traditional Christianity, have published articles taking these principles seriously.

In one of their recent Breakpoint commentaries, Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey described a meeting to which Colson was invited by U.S. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfield. Rumsfeld invited leaders of several faith communities to discuss openly the ethical limits imposed on warfare by their traditions.

Honorable motives

It is tempting, of course, to take a cynical view of such a gathering. The U.S. government might perhaps be seen to be co-opting religious leaders to bring them on side of its fight against terrorism. I myself prefer to ascribe honorable motives to Rumsfeld and the rest of the Bush administration. Yet, even if their motivations are tainted with a measure of *Realpolitik*, the mere fact that they are constrained even to raise the issue of just warfare is an inestimable improvement over the dark days of the 1960s, when American military officials in the grip of a total war mentality seemed to revel in inflated body counts.

Warfare will always present difficulties for Christians. Not, I would argue, because there is something wrong with the use of force, but because, in contrast to police power, the link between such force and a stable régime of justice is uncertain at best. Yet, if war must be fought, then it is good that government officials be made to measure their own efforts against traditional just war principles.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario. For informative reading on the subject of the just war, see the following website: http://www.thejustcause.com/index.html.

Editorial (Humor)

Oh no, not the tubes!

Harry der Nederlanden

My mother was right. "Stay away from doctors – as far as possible, as much as possible, as stubbornly as possible."

She didn't just hold this as a creed. She practiced it. During our first eight years in Canada not a single one of us ever saw a doctor. Or a nurse. Or a dentist.

Well, that isn't entirely true. Every now and then a nurse would visit the school – a thin, hawk-nosed woman with eyes like bits of coal and long, bony fingers that probed and pulled and poked. She was especially vigilant about the health of us immigrant kids, calling us out of class to dismantle us piece by piece, examine the pieces with her microscope eyes, and send us back to class only partly reassembled.

Guilt by association

She used chopsticks to poke at our scalps, sniffing and squinting (her nose as well as her eyes), until one day my sister was sent home. "Headlice!" was the verdict. Next thing, I was sent home too. Guilt by association.

I sat on the kitchen table waiting patiently while my mother examined my sister's scalp, scolding furiously about the injustice and humiliation visited on us by that know-nothing nurse. I waited patiently because when my mom was finished I planned to throttle my sister for undermining my hard-earned status at school. I'd earned it the hard way – by dealing out three bloody noses and getting only a black eye in return.

Finally my mother pronounced a 'Not guilty!' over my sister's head and declared the school nurse to be both incompetent and possessed by malign forces.

I got the message: the medical establishment was arrayed against us, eager to demean us and get us under its rule. My mother knew that the best defense is a good offense, and she immediately sent us back to school with a long letter (written mostly in Dutch) putting the school nurse in her place. She had learned how to deal with fascists during the Nazi occupation and had learned that you mustn't let them intimidate you.

After eight years a young, good-looking, charming and Dutch-speaking doctor began practicing in Edmonton and soon I was getting poked and prodded in the doctor's office as well as at school. What a humiliating capitulation!

My second lesson came in fifth grade when late in the fall the school nurse handed out brown bottles of cod liver oil pills. She said they were very good for us. Every kid in the school got a whole bottle filled with round, semi-transparent pills that looked like little glass marbles.

After school one of the new immigrant kids invited me to come home with him to play marbles with him and his numerous brothers in their big living room. Maybe the room just looked big because there wasn't a stick of furniture in it.. The *kist* (packing crate) had gotten lost. Their kitchen table was a big door on saw horses. The room was just a huge expanse of linoleum — ideal for playing marbles. The little marbles in the brown bottles even had a little bounce to them.

As we played, we popped our winnings in our mouths and swallowed. Hadn't the nurse said they were good for us?

Catching applied Calvinism

The next day, we all wore a deep path to the outhouse. You had to be fast. Our mothers thought we'd caught something hugely contagious. Till one of them found one of the empty brown bottles. Then what we caught wasn't contagious though it passed from house to house. It was applied Calvinism.

Being clever immigrant kids, we, of course, knew we were merely innocent victims of the school nurse. Medicine not only humiliated you, it could be dangerous to your well-being and your status as well.

I think back on this primal history every day now as I lie face-down on the metal X-ray table with my bare buttock jutting up in the air as the Machine bombards it with invisible rays. It's an act of faith. You have to believe in the invisible rays. Sometimes I suspect the female technicians are just sending draughts of frigid air over my bum, while they giggle behind six feet of concrete.

There I lie, prone before the giant Radiation Machine, which impales me with its cruel eye as I abase myself before it like a heathen before his idol. The god of medicine loves to reduce us in this way.

Begging for mercy

The first time I climbed up on the table and felt a cold wind passing over my posterior, I thought I was being sacrificed to this towering one-eyed god. As I lay face-down, eyes closed, butt gathering goose bumps, hands up over my head, the steel table rolled toward the impermeable god – till it hit and smashed my fingertips. I begged for mercy – and a cup of crushed ice.

What? Paranoid? You think I'm imagining this conspiracy of the god of medicine against my, I mean *our*, manliness? I mean, *humanity*.

A few days after my Big Operation, as I lay languishing in my bed, in came a squadron of nurses carrying a tray of torture instruments. And a fearsome, terrifying array of tubes. Oh no, not the tubes!

"This won't hurt a bit." When was the last time I'd heard that? "Just relax and let us do the work." As the tube approached my nose, it looked as large as a garden hose. Up my nose it went. Relax? Who can relax when someone's stuffing a fire hose up your nose. "Whaaah!"

"Whoops, it doesn't seem to be going in. Did you ever have a broken nose? How did that happen? Did that hurt?"

Did you ever try to conduct a conversation when someone's got her hand up your nose?

"Well, let's try the other side." Oh, joy, great, galloping snotballs of joy!

"Oh, good; this time it's going in."

I watched in horror as she fed metre after metre of hose up my nose. It was coiling up in my throat, but I couldn't speak. I was too busy gagging. When my eyes began bulging out like a frog and my body convulsing, she said once again, "Just relax!" and she tried to press me down on the bed. I opened my mouth wide and she spotted the coils of rubber hose in my throat. My body was trying to vomit and I could feel the row of metal stitches in my gut threatening to pop.

"Whoops!" she said again as she yanked the hose back and started over.

Happy tormentors of humanity

That's what the god of medicine does to those under its spell: it turns them into happy tormentors of humanity. Space forbids me to tell of the numerous times they inserted tubing in other parts of my anatomy, smiling happily, drawing out the process. Were they in the middle of a divorce process, I wondered, and taking out their hostility on me? "Does that hurt?" (Big smile.) "Should I go slower?" (Pitying tone.) "Aaarrggghh!" (That's me.)

The last tube I had to get inserted into a vein in my arm and then fed into my chest. An Italian fellow was first. He was red-faced, sweating and trembling all over, despite the fact that he'd been given two tranquilizers. He began moaning and hollering even before the curtains closed around him. They worked on him a long time. Then I heard that fateful word again: "Whoops!"

An hour later, the nurses emerged giggling, and after the Italian left, they imitated his squeals.

"Don't worry," the nurse said to me, as she approached me with her tray of torture instruments. "Usually this goes without a hitch and you don't feel a thing." She smiled sweetly. But deep in her eyes I saw something ominous: the glint of coal, of something subterranean and dark..

Sure enough. Five hours later, I was going for my fourth X-ray. She patted me on the shoulder as she wheeled me down the hall toward the big Machine. "Don't worry; we'll get this right sooner or later," she whispered tenderly.

Yes, the god of medicine is powerful, intimidating and demands total subservience. Your will is stripped from you, and soon his willing, eager servants are guiding, pulling, and wheeling you from one room to another, from one appointment to another, from one doctor to another, from one hospital to another. Till one day you find yourself lying prone before the great Machine. Utterly abased, mortified, and partly crushed, your butt exposed for all to see.

[My apologies to the many dedicated nurses, doctors and technicians who gave me their best – with grace and humor – during my battle with cancer. If I've skewered them a bit here, I remind them that they've skewered me a lot worse!]

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News

Carey announces his retirement as Archbishop of Canterbury

Cedric Pulford

LONDON, England (ENI) — The archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, leader of the world's 70 million Anglicans, is to retire three years ahead of the usual retirement age for the post.

Dr. Carey, who made the widely-expected announcement today, will leave office in October, when he will be 67, after having helped Queen Elizabeth II mark the 50th anniversary of her reign. It is understood that the Queen asked him to stay on for her golden jubilee this year. Carey has been archbishop of Canterbury since 1991.

He said: "I shall have served 11 and a half years in a demanding yet wonderfully absorbing and rewarding post. I feel certain this will be the right and proper time to stand down. I look forward to exciting opportunities and challenges in the coming months, and then to fresh ones in the years that follow."

A senior church official at a press briefing today denied that Carey was retiring early, pointing out that bishops could retire from age 65. "Carey wants to hand on the baton to his successor while he is still full of energy, vitality and commitment and I can assure you that he is," the official said.

Carey's three immediate predecessors — Robert Runcie, Donald Coggan and Michael Ramsey — all served until around the age of 70, but the pressures of the post have been increasing while the see of Canterbury has developed as the de facto presidency of the world-wide Anglican Communion.

Last year, the head of a team inquiring into the future of the Canterbury see, Lord Hurd of Westwell, suggested to ENI that the archbishop's job was becoming unmanageable.

"Lambeth [the archbishop's administrative office in London] has grown organically. We are trying to make the whole manageable," Lord Hurd said.

An opportunity to restructure

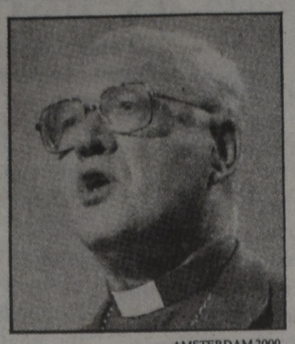
Among the proposals in the team's report, *To Lead and to Serve*, are the appointment of a foreign bishop to work at Lambeth on Anglican Communion affairs, and more freedom for the archbishop from his duties as a diocesan bishop. Carey's retirement creates an obvious opportunity to restructure the Canterbury see.

Among those mentioned by commentators as possible successors to Carey are the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres; the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones; the Bishop of St. Albans, Christopher Herbert; the Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali; and the Archbishop of Wales, Rowan Williams.

The Church of England's second-ranking prelate, the archbishop of York, David Hope, is not viewed as a candidate. There is no automatic succession from York to Canterbury, and Hope is only a few years younger than Dr Carey.

Since the Church of England is an establishment church, the appointment of bishops and archbishops is made in the name of Queen Elizabeth II, but in practice by the British government.

The new archbishop of Canterbury will be chosen by the prime minister, Tony Blair, himself an Anglican, from two names put forward by church authorities. A senior church official said the prime minister was at liberty to decline both names. Responding to a question from ENI, the official declined to state when such a step had last been taken, if at all.



AMSTERDAM 2000

Dr. George Carey

Whatever Blair's own views, the person he chooses as archbishop will have to face the challenge of holding together both the Church of England and the Anglican Communion.

Dealing with potential splits

Much of Carey's time has been spent dealing with potential splits in the two bodies. Early in his tenure, in 1994, the first women priests were ordained into the Church of England — a move strongly supported by the archbishop. A major split in the church was avoided by the appointment of "flying bishops", allowing traditionalist parishes to receive pastoral supervision from bishops of like mind rather than the diocesan bishop.

Pressure has since built for women to be appointed as bishops. A church commission of inquiry is examining the issue under the chairmanship of one of the presumed candidates to succeed Carey, Bishop Nazir-Ali, who has expressed personal sympathy with the idea of women bishops.

The Church of England and the Anglican Communion face the unresolved issue of homosexuality within the church. Carey has made clear his opposition to the ordination of practicing homosexuals. The 1998 Lambeth Conference, the world-wide gathering of Anglican bishops, declared, with Carey's support, that homosexual practice was incompatible with Scripture.

Carey found himself in the middle of a dispute involving the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in the United States and conservative dissidents unhappy with what they claim is growing liberalism in the church. In January 2000, two Americans were consecrated bishops outside the country, returning to the U.S. to work as "missionaries". The archbishop said he could not recognize bishops who did not have the support of the territorial authorities.

One of the chief themes of Carey's time in office has been the fight against moral relativism. In 1996 he observed: "We live in a society which is losing touch with its traditional religious and moral roots ... Individualism and relativism have seeped deep into our culture."

After the announcement of his retirement, Carey won praise from the two main wings of the Church of England.

Leading evangelical Mark Birchall, a former key figure in the evangelical group of the Church of England's ruling general synod, said the archbishop had done "an extremely difficult job very well".

Birchall told ENI: "He held the fractures in place both internationally and nationally.

Geoffrey Kirk, secretary of the traditionalist group Forward in Faith, said that after a hesitant start, Carey had "established himself as a significant archbishop" in his influence world-wide and in reforming the administration of the Church of England — a reference to the streamlining of the church's central decision-making capacity.

Kirk told ENI: "I'm surprised he was not more eager to stay on and steer further the recommendations of the Hurd Commission [on the future of the see of Canterbury]."

Richard Kirker, secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM), strongly criticized Carey's stance on homosexuality. "We regret that Archbishop Carey made an already difficult situation infinitely worse as he so obviously failed to grasp the reality of homophobia, which is prevalent in the church and which the LGCM has consistently argued needs to be challenged if it is to be eradicated," he told ENI.

"He has used all the means at his disposal to prevent homosexuals who are self-affirming [open] from entering the ministry."

Bishop appeals for peace in Zimbabwe

... continued from page 3

Political violence and intimidation have been mounting in Zimbabwe over the past few months in the run-up to the presidential election, scheduled for March 9 and 10. In this election, Mugabe faces the strongest challenge ever to his 21-year-rule from opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

In late December, during a congress of his ruling Zanu-PF party in the southern resort town of Victoria Falls, Mugabe vowed to crush the MDC. During the past two months, at least four people, all believed to be members of the MDC, have been killed.

The bloodshed has drawn the attention of the international community. Last autumn, the European Union threatened to impose sanctions against Zimbabwe unless intimidation of political opposition stopped. A delegation of Zimbabwean government officials was expected to meet EU officials this month.

Zimbabwe's parliament has just approved new security and election laws which critics say are intended to stifle dissent before the elections. The parliament is also expected to pass a law introducing tight controls on the media.

The security bill gives the police new powers and would make it an offence to criticize the president. New election regulations restrict foreign and local independent election monitors.

In his comments at the New Year ceremony, Bishop Mukandi called for dialogue between different factions of Zimbabwe society: "My fellow Zimbabweans, it is better we cease all hostility among ourselves. Let us solve our disputes over the table."

The bishop linked the political turmoil to the country's economic crisis which has seen the unemployment rate reach 60 per cent, and the rate of inflation stand at more than 100 per cent. "In the absence of peace there is no development or prosperity to talk about," he said.

The bishop added: "Zimbabwe is our home and we have no other. As patriotic citizens, let us play a positive role in building a just and peace-loving society."

The British government recently threatened to call for the suspension of Zimbabwe's membership in the Commonwealth at

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Education

Does campus ministry make an impact?

Michael Veenema

Can Canada's large secular universities host Christian conferences? Can leading Christian academics and local Christian professors show the broader university community how faithfulness to the risen Jesus Christ brings hope to research, writing and learning? As a Christian Reformed Campus Minister, I have found that the answer to those questions is, "Yes they can."

At the University of Western Ontario (UWO), where I am in my seventh year, a group of Christian professors and ministry staff have worked together to bring about three such conferences called Veritas Forums. Co-operation to make the events happen has been outstanding. Local Protestant and Catholic churches, a significant Presbyterian trust and some local industry have helped fund the events. The university itself has provided concrete support in the way of printing, facilities and official words of endorsement. We have been encouraged to see that churches and universities can indeed co-operate to discuss how God makes a difference, in discussion areas such as Global Conflict, Literature, Biotechnology and Business Ethics.

Truth as a person

"Veritas" is Latin for truth. The forum has its origins at Harvard and the organizers there, in the early 1990s, used the motto of that institution, "Veritas." When Harvard was established, Veritas stood for truth as person, Jesus Christ. UWO's motto is (conveniently!) "Veritas et Utilitas."

Our conferences are costly and they require a lot of work. However, we always feel our efforts are worthwhile. A large number of professors and senior administrators have been involved in the forum. Another good measure of the effects of our work is found in students who tell us how their thinking is being changed. What follows is an article written by one of these. It may give us increased appreciation for the work of Christian Campus Ministry carried on by the Christian Reformed Church and those who partner with them.

attending university is the Veritas Forum. It is an academic conference that enables Christian scholars from a broad variety of disciplines to speak to campuses about their work and how it is informed by their faith. Over the three years that Veritas has taken place at the University of Western Ontario, it has sponsored talks from all sectors of the academic community including moral philosophy, medical ethics, literary theory and current events. A varied audience usually attends the sessions. It includes undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty and interested members of the community. Most lectures have a duration of about 45 minutes. An opportunity for responses and questions follows.

Extremely exciting

It is extremely exciting to have this sort of event occurring on my campus. It is fantastic to see Christian scholars having the opportunity to engage a secular campus openly and without apologizing for their beliefs. It is also encouraging to see the academic community of the university participating in this event.

An example of this occurred two years ago when I listened to a presentation from Dr. Peter Kreeft on the flaws of moral relativism. His responder was the chair of the philosophy department. The two of them got into an excellent debate after Kreeft's initial presentation. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to an academic debate on this topic where the fact of Kreeft's Christianity didn't ruin his academic credibility. As a student who plans to pursue graduate studies, it is very encouraging to see scholars who do not have to put their Christian faith on the shelf when they do their studies. The university is willing to listen. It seems to me that this is an opportunity which Christians should seize.

Christians can and should have a voice

More recently, this year Dr. Gary Badcock gave a presentation on Christian responses to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. He called for a dialogue between Christians and Muslims and he argued that the university campus was the best location for it. He proceeded to show how this could work when he answered questions asked by Muslim students in attendance. He replied intelligently and with respect for Islamic tradition. In a time when tensions were running high, it was encouraging to hear a Christian take the lead in addressing a difficult issue. This talk demonstrated that Christians can and should have a voice in the intellectual life of a secular university.

Forum helped him immensely

On a more personal level, the Veritas Forum has helped me immensely in my own walk of faith. Two years ago I heard a presentation from Dr. David Lyle Jeffrey on the literary structure of the Bible. He argued that in order to read and utilize the Bible properly, we need to keep in mind the Biblical *metanarrative*, or its overarching story. He then went on to detail his own conception of the Biblical metanarrative. I heard this talk at a time when I was struggling with how my faith related to the rest of my life. Hearing this talk and thinking about it over the following months helped me get past that struggle. It, along with some other sources, eventually provided me with a greater understanding of how the Bible relates to my life.

I do not know what the future holds for the Veritas Forum. I do know that the planning committee at Western is looking to see it continue in years to come. My prayer as a graduating student is that there will be other students who are influenced by it to combine their academic studies with their Christian faith, and who use it as an opportunity to proclaim boldly that Christianity should have a prominent voice on the university campus.

Michael Veenema is Christian Reformed Campus Minister at the University of Western Ontario.

* * * * *

A Mind-altering experience

Joel Barker

Probably the event that has had the greatest impact on my Christian life while I have been

Joel Barker is a fourth year History student.

Inter-faith gleanings

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman

January comes like the top of another hill, and from here we gaze into the future. It's a time to get the big picture. Set some priorities, strategies for living and loving.

One of the big picture issues that I need to constantly be reminded of as I work in the university is inter-religious dialogue and understanding. In fact, I would say the events of 9-11 are a call in this direction again: a call not to further entrenched nationalism (and faithism?), but to deeper investigation of the other faiths with whom we share the planet. We are so woefully ignorant of each other.

So I went to an inter-faith conference in New York City as I rounded off the top of 2001 into 2002, and this is what I saw over the hill.

Peace in the midst of devastation

The conference began with a prayer service in St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the famous church that did not get destroyed in the fire and ash of the 110 stories that crashed into their graveyard. This church has been a haven of rest, a place of rescue and relief, 24/7 ever since September 11th. Regardless of faith, race, or status, people squeeze into this building for food, shelter, and community. There are hardly any free spaces on the walls or pillars, as they are wallpapered with cards, notes, flowers, and crafts sent by children and adults from all over the world.

The prayer service included Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist prayers, each done by representatives of the particular communities. Prayers were for peace, for justice, and for renewal. Then we had a prayer walk onto the viewing platform now made available to the public at Ground Zero. Here we saw what looked like a construction site: 16 acres of rubble and ruin over-shadowed by a crowd of dusty skyscrapers, with about 20 excavators' metal elbows dumping loads of concrete and wire into patient dump trucks.

Gut responses

What we were looking at was certainly the result of politically motivated violence. But there is a strong religious element to the event as well. "God" has been used and abused by people to kill and oppress others.

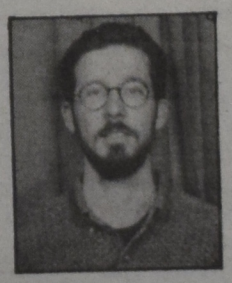
Let me be honest with you: I can get cynical about inter-faith dialogue, as it can become reductionistic, superficial, and nothing more than an anthropological tour through the world religion zoo. I find (and maybe this is just a matter of limited time resources) that those deeply involved in inter-faith tend to be marginally attached to their "home" faith communities, and "inter-faith" becomes their faith community of choice. A number of them spoke of "poly-religious identity" and affirmed it as normative, not just for our times, but as the goal of humanity. This makes me feel really uncomfortable, not just because it seems incoherent or confusing, but also because it sounds like Hinduism. It fits with their worldview of God as taking many different forms and characters.

A compassionate, understanding heart

Yet, this I also learned: inter-faith dialogue requires more than intellectual skills. It requires a compassionate and understanding heart, a willingness to love someone very different from oneself — something seminaries are less able and prepared to teach to their students. Inter-faith dialogue introduces one to spiritual practices that may also be a part of one's own tradition, but have been forgotten, neglected. Finally, inter-faith dialogue may help keep us from killing each other in a never-ending cycle of violence.

One of the Sikhs at the conference told us the story of how his religious building was burned to the ground a few weeks ago. "They thought we were Muslims," he said. They responded to this hate crime by issuing a public statement of forgiveness to the perpetrators through the media. "They will still be tried by the law," he said, "but they are forgiven by the community." They sacrificed their right to anger in the name of love.

I wondered what they meant by "forgive" and what place it has in their faith. I realized I have absolutely no idea. Maybe this ought to be a year of listening, even while we continue to articulate who we are. And more importantly, listen even while we continue to *live* who we are called to be.



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Arts/Media

Book Review

Jewish Tales: hope in the midst of horror

Phil de Haan

Finding hope in the midst of horror is at the heart of a new book by Calvin professor and author Gary Schmidt.

Mara's Stories is a collection of 22 Jewish folktales, brought together from a variety of sources, and told by a fictional narrator, Mara, who is in a concentration camp. Her audience is the women and children of the camp, who each evening come to Mara's bunk to hear the words.

For awhile they are free

"Mara is waiting for them all," Schmidt says in the book. "No matter what new wound bleeds through her shirt, she is waiting. No matter what new bruise is swelling, she is waiting. She is waiting with the light and the

warmth of stories. Everyone gathers around, and from her lips to their ears the stories go, and for a little while the camp disappears, and for a little while they are all free."

In Hebrew, the name Mara means bitter. Schmidt says he gave his narrator that name not because she herself is bitter, but because she lives in the bitterest of times. And Mara's stories are not bitter, despite her surroundings. Instead, she spins tapestries whose warmth wards off the chill of the camp and whose lessons live yet today.

"They celebrate," Schmidt says, "all that is good and strong in the human spirit, all that cannot be destroyed by evil. It is one of the reasons why the stories are powerful for all listeners, all readers, and why the stories are still alive today."

In the book Mara tells stories from a variety of times and places. Some are tales that she heard from her father, the Rabbi, but she has taken those Hasidic tales and brought them into her own time "as will any good storyteller," says Schmidt. Indeed, Mara finds that the truth of those tales is just as present in the barracks of the Holocaust as in 19th century Poland or Russia. Mara also tell stories that have come to life in the camps.

Skilfully woven together

Schmidt, a Long Island native who grew up in a predominantly Jewish community, did extensive research to bring together the 22 stories in the book, skilfully weaving together the works of such sources as the Jewish religious scholar Martin Buber, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel and folklorists Steve Zeitlin and Yaffa Eliach.

In fact, a letter from Wiesel helped convince Schmidt to pursue publishing the book. "I wrote the book five or six years ago," he says, "and then I put it away. Although I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood and had lots of Jewish friends, I'm not Jewish. Actually my background is English, German and French. And so I wasn't sure if I should be telling these important Jewish stories. But then I wrote (Elie) Wiesel and I sent him a copy of the manuscript. And he wrote back and said 'you will write this for social justice.' If Wiesel could say that, well, I sent it (the manuscript) off soon after that."

True to their Jewish roots

The book's stories, many of which actually were told in the barracks, are true to their Jewish roots, but Schmidt often brings fictional twists and literary turns to the tales. For example, in a piece called The "Good Morning" Schmidt retells the tale of two neighbors who see each other daily and greet each other warmly. But then one man arrives at a death camp, only to find that his neighbor is a guard. And not just any guard, but the one who decides which prisoners should die and which should be sent to work and thus live.

It's a well-known Jewish story, but Schmidt brings his own perspective to it. He has the two men meet each morning as they tend their gardens, giving them, he says, a regular reason to be out and to see each other. And as he describes one man's care for his garden he foreshadows his role in the camps.

Making careful selections

"And every morning, when Herr Shaul passes," writes Schmidt, "Herr Mueller would be on his knees in the garden, planting a seedling he had nursed through the late winter, spading over the dark soil, or carefully separating a grouping of lily bulbs, laying aside those he thought would no longer bloom and replanting the others. Herr Mueller was very careful about his selection."

Later, in the camp, Herr Shaul sees the two lines split. "To the left shuffled the old ones like himself, so weak, drooping like wilted daffodils. To the right younger ones, ones who might be made to work for the murderers." And then Herr Shaul comes to the front of the line and comes to the Nazi officer making the selections. And before he can check himself he says: "Good morning, Herr Mueller." And Mueller, before he even thinks, replies: "Good morning, Herr Shaul." And then Herr Mueller must select. And he jerks his thumb and says: "To the right."

In the back of the book Schmidt includes notes for each story, both historical threads to the story and his own thoughts about how it was spun from his imagination. In his notes for The "Good Morning," Schmidt says he was tempted to have Herr Mueller motion to the left "as it is almost impossible to imagine someone in such a position having any sense of humanity or compassion left that would lead him to grant Herr Shaul even a chance at life. But I let the ending stand in the perhaps vain hope that in some camp, at some moment, at least one man responsible for sheer evil felt the beginning of shame."

The story, Schmidt says, is based loosely on one told by storyteller and writer Steve Sanfield. It also is told in Yaffa Eliach's *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust.* "It is a story," says Schmidt, "that questions how apparently ordinary people could become a part of something so vastly evil. It is a question with no answer." Herr Shaul is named after Rabbi Shaul who as a young boy traveled with the Baal Shem Tov and met another young boy, Ivan, with whom he became friends. Years later Rabbi Shaul was stopped by robbers and brought to their leader, Ivan, who recognized his boyhood friend and released him unharmed.

That attention to historical detail is evident in reading the notes to each of the 22 stories. Schmidt says it was important for him to get the stories right and to demonstrate their power not only for the Jewish community, but for all people.

"The Holocaust," he says, "is not just a Jewish story or a German story. It's a story for all of humanity. My hope for this book is that it will bring to even wider audiences important lessons of perseverance and hope, lessons that are for us, in every generation, always new, always true."

Movie critic helps parents, consumers make wholesome entertainment choices

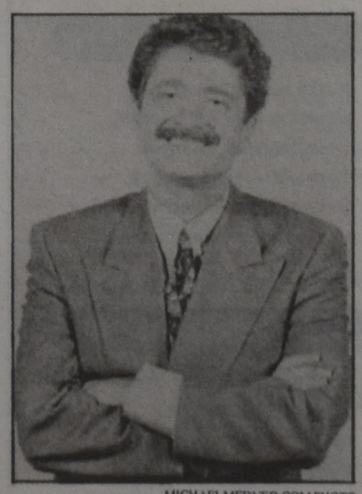
Mark Ellis Senior Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

SEATTLE, WA (ANS) – Entertainment critic and talk show host Michael Medved hosted the "Good Entertainment" special on PAX-TV December 15, and inaugurate a web-site designed to help concerned parents and confused consumers navigate a morass of movie and entertainment choices.

"The problem that many families encounter is a shortage of information about the kind of messages and values a piece of entertainment is communicating," says Medved, who co-hosted the PBS show *Sneak Previews* for 12 years, and authored a biting critique of the entertainment industry in his book *Hollywood vs. America.* His syndicated radio program reaches more than two million listeners in 129 markets.

Applying a consistent standard

The TV program and website (**www.goodentertainment.com**) will analyze all forms of entertainment, from movies to video games, and seek to apply a consistent standard in recommending wholesome entertainment choices. Medved and his industry partners will award the "Good Entertainment Seal" to products that measure up to their standard of values and entertainment.



MICHAEL MEDVED.COM PHOTO

Michael Medved

"We're not setting up a rating system," Medved says. "The seal will be on material that is both highly entertaining and diverting and artistically excellent — as well as wholesome," he says.

A serious, observant Jew

Some choices, which have a redeeming message, but are not appropriate for children, will receive a recommendation for adult audiences only. "For instance, *Saving Private Ryan* is such an outstanding film, but obviously it's not appropriate for children," Medved says. While the program will reflect traditional values, there will not be any overt faith-based ties, according to Medved. "The people who are involved with creating this television show are all coming from a faith-based position," says Medved, who describes himself as a "serious and observant Jew."

"Concerns about values in American entertainment go far beyond the religious community," he says. There's no question that my own values and my approach to

See **MOVIES** *page 8...*

Church/Media

Death sentence for Christian 'cult' leader in China

Paul Davenport

HONG KONG (Compass) — The founder of the South China Church was sentenced to death after a secret trial on December 18, a Hong Kong-based human rights group said.

Gong Shengliang, 46, was convicted and sentenced by the Jingmen City Intermediate Court in China's central Hubei province. He was accused of "using a cult to undermine the enforcement of the law" and of "complicity in rape," according to the Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

Gong was also accused of injuring 14 people during church rituals involving exorcism. His niece, Li Ying, 36, was also sentenced to death, but the sentence was suspended for two years.

Granted a reprieve

The 46-year-old founder of the "South China" house church movement was granted a reprieve from his death sentence, which was due to be carried out on Saturday, January 5. Gong was given a stay of execution, relatives said. The official reason from the Chinese Foreign Ministry was that Gong had been granted a period of several months to appeal the death sentence.

Fifteen other members of the church were sentenced to prison for periods ranging from two years to life. All have maintained their innocence and are appealing. The sentences come just after a major Communist Party conference on religious affairs held in early December that called for tightened control of all religions.

The South China Church is described as having about 50,000 members scattered across 10 Chinese provinces. The Ministry of Public Security reportedly added the South China Church to a list of banned religious sects in April last year, press reports said.

Materials made available to Compass Direct, however, seem to indicate that the South China Church is not a heretical cult but an "evangelical, fundamentalist" Christian church, as the Associated Press stated on Dec. 31.

China watchers said the case has several worrying features.

Trial held in secret

First, the rape accusation is similar to that made against the founder of the Established King cult, Wu Yangming, who was executed in 1995, and against founder of the Lord God cult, Liu Jiaguo, who was executed in 1999.

Second, with the trial held in secret, it is difficult to verify the truth of the accusations made against Gong. Historically, once a religious group is labeled a "cult" by the Chinese government, certain stereotyped accusations are made against the leaders. In the cases of Wu and Liu, some detailed proof of their guilt was published. But no information has been made available in Gong's case. On April 15, 2000, the South China Church published an open invitation to Christian workers in China and overseas to attend a conference in central China.

The invitation was issued to "all those pastors, elders and evangelists of every denomination within China who hold the Bible as their ultimate authority, as well as those overseas who are concerned for the Chinese church (cults and heresies excluded)."

The spirit of openness in this invitation seems to be very different from the narrow secretiveness of a heretical cult.

The aim of the conference was "to study the 2,000 year history of the church and the reasons for its growth and decline, as well as the creeds laid down by the great apologists of the church" and "study the history of the church in China, especially why the gospel failed to put down roots several times in China, as well as the reasons for the weakness or flourishing of the gospel in every region of China today."

The conference also planned to determine "how every denomination in China could seek unity in the truth based on the Bible as the authority and how to supply the urgent needs of believers in every area of China for pastoral training." The conference invitation closed with the following prayer:

"Lord! Please bless this conference that it may be a turning point in Chinese history, based on biblical truth, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the unity and love of Christ. May You rectify the mistakes of every church in China and point out the way for man to come to God, and for everyone to be united in the truth. We pray for everyone chosen by God before time to salvation in distant mountains and villages — for the poor and lowest classes of people. May the very last prodigal return home. And we pray for the revival of the gospel in China, and the invigoration of the entire body of Christ. May God's plan of salvation be completed and may we be united in one love and in one Spirit!"

Compass was unable to confirm whether this conference was ever held, but the above evidence reads very differently from the crude ravings of the Established King and Lord God cults. A cover letter to the conference invitation states that the South China Church is based in Hubei province but also has churches in Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Hebei, Henan, Shandong and Sichuan provinces. In each province there are "over 100 local churches," the letter said. The letter also stated that the church has over 300 full-time evangelists ranging in age from the teens to over 30 years, who are mainly from poor, rural areas and have only primary or lower middle school education. The letter claimed that between 1998 and 2000 the church had published 30 editions of a [presumably clandestine] Christian magazine called *Salvation and China*.

Even if the rape charge against Gong is substantiated, China watchers say this is no reason to persecute an entire church of tens of thousands of people by arresting its leaders and closing down its meetings. It seems China's unregistered house church Christians have every right to fear being wrongly labeled as cult members.

Refugees warm to adobe houses

ROME (Zenit.org) — The Caritas international network is helping to build 425 adobe homes for Afghan refugees at the Shamshatoo Camp in northern Pakistan.

Each home costs about $110. They are being built from clay and water by the refugees themselves, with the help of camp personnel and local technicians.

These adobe houses are cheap and of simple construction. The refugees prefer them to more elaborate temporary homes, which lack the thermal advantages of clay. Clay houses are cool in the hot summer months and warm in winter.

More than half of the 60,000 refugees now in the Shamshatoo Camp live in canvas tents. Caritas hopes to construct up to 7,000 of the adobe houses there.

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Medved: Movies give flawed view of America

... continued from page 7

various issues is influenced by my own religious commitments. But that doesn't mean what people will be getting will be an agenda or a particularist-driven approach to entertainment. There is no ministry agenda or evangelical agenda of any kind.

"Christians in particular have been very outspoken about criticizing some of the absence of suitable family entertainment in American media choices," Medved continues, "but now that concern has been taken up by many others. As I argued in my book, *Hollywood vs. America*, they [Hollywood filmmakers] no longer reflect or even respect the values of ordinary Americans," he says.

The portrayal of American life in film is as flawed today as it was in the days of Frank Capra, according to Medved. "Movies are never a perfect reflection of reality," he says. "They're not supposed to be, because real life is never as exciting as what you're trying to package in entertainment.

From heart-warming to hostile

"Did Hollywood in the days of Frank Capra present an America that was more heroic, more glamorous, more heart-warming than the real America?" Medved asks. "The answer is probably."

"But I don't buy the idea that today's version of America is more accurate. I think if anything it's less accurate — it's just in a different direction. Rather than creating a glamorized, sanitized view of the United States, we have a view of American life that is more negative, more hostile, and more dysfunctional than the real country."

While some would like to see Hollywood return to a more wholesome era, Medved believes that is unrealistic and unlikely. "The country has changed and so has the entertainment industry. The best you could hope for," he says, " is that the entertainment industry gets realigned with the country at large."

Mark Ellis is a Senior Correspondent for ASSIST News Service. He is also the Assistant Pastor at Calvary Evangelical Free Church of Laguna Beach, CA.

Church

Churches struggle with issues of homosexuality

Reprinted with permission from *World Magazine*

To see in microcosm the struggles conservatives in America's liberal-led mainline denominations faced in 2001, look no farther than 200-attendee Circleville Presbyterian in New York. Church leaders believe continued membership in the Presbyterian Church (USA) threatens the very future of the congregation.

The church has asked the PCUSA's regional governing unit, Hudson River presbytery, one of the 2.5-million-member PCUSA's most liberal, for permission to leave, join the 190-congregation Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and keep its property — an unlikely prospect.

Circleville is committed to evangelical doctrine and outreach. Per-capita giving at $2,500 is more than triple the PCUSA average. But the church has stopped growing. Its leaders say key members have been walking, others have reduced their giving, and it's harder to attract new people. Slimmer offerings forced the church to make cutbacks and halt construction of a new facility. The leaders blame the mess on the liberal activism of the presbytery and the denomination's national governing body.

Igniting a national controversy

In 1999 the presbytery authorized clergy to conduct services of blessing for same-sex couples, igniting national controversy. The PCUSA's highest court approved the step, provided the services don't resemble marriages or endorse homosexual practice — a curious in-the-beholder's-eye verdict. After some ministers in Hudson River began promoting same-sex union services, Circleville took out a full-page ad in the local newspaper to say where it stood.

Another shoe dropped last June at the PCUSA's general assembly, the most liberal-minded one in years. It voted by a 3-2 margin to remove a "fidelity-in-marriage, chastity-in-singleness" ordination standard from the constitution and to nullify a 23-year-old ban on ordination of practicing homosexuals. More than three-fourths of Hudson River's delegates voted in favor of the changes.

Hoping to ride out the storm, Circleville aligned itself with the conservative Confessing Church Movement that sprang up in the PCUSA in March.

CCM already includes 10 per cent of the PCUSA's 11,364 congregations and 15 per cent of its members, and is still growing. It emphasizes three central themes: Christ alone is Lord and Savior, Scripture is the infallible rule of faith and life, and God's standards for holy living transcend political, cultural, and social changes.

Accommodation might best describe what happened in some denominational settings this year.

The 2.5-million-adherent Assemblies of God loosened the standards for ministerial credentials by now allowing people who were divorced before conversion — and can prove that's when it happened — to apply for clergy certification. The group also rejected as "unscriptural" any expression of faith that "suggests or requires one to exclude competent medical advice and/or treatment when seeking prayer for healing."

Coverage for domestic partners

The 810,000-member Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) pension board authorized medical coverage for domestic partners of unmarried employees. The shrinking 1.3-million-member United Church of Christ was the first denomination to offer such coverage.

The 125,000-member Salvation Army flip-flopped on the issue of domestic-partner benefits for non-clergy employees. The Army first allowed the 13-state Western branch to provide them in order to compete for millions of dollars of tax money from cities and counties that placed such a requirement on contractors, then rescinded the arrangement after supporters and many of its own clergy rocked headquarters with protests.

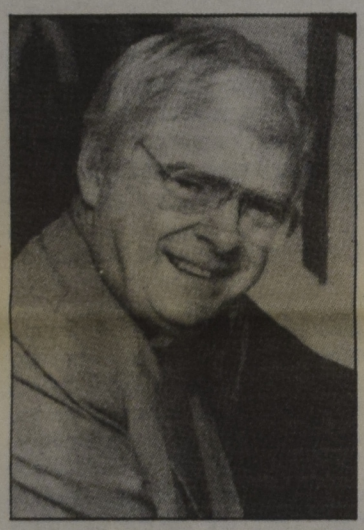
The 5.1-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America agreed to accommodate clergy opposed for conscience reasons to an element in a "common communion" pact the ELCA made with the Episcopal Church. The pact inducted ELCA bishops, formerly ordinary pastoral administrators, into "apostolic succession," as understood by Catholics and Anglicans. Responding to widespread unrest over the change, the ELCA adopted a bylaw that allows bishops to delegate ordination to other ELCA clergy "for pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances." Episcopal leaders say the circumstances had better be rare, or they may reconsider the pact. It allows the two denominations to call clergy ordained in either one.

Secularism is stifling religious expression, Anglican primate warns

Ferdy Baglo

VANCOUVER (ENI) — The primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Michael Peers, has cautioned that secularism in Canada is threatening the public expression of religion.

In a New Year's sermon at Ottawa's Christ Church Cathedral, Archbishop Peers said that government officials were ridding public ceremonies of religious references for fear of offending someone.



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA WEBSITE

Archbishop Michael Peers

He pointed to the national service of mourning held three days after the September 11 attacks in the United States. The ceremony, on the lawn of the parliament buildings, attended by Prime Minister Jean Chretien and other government leaders, avoided any religious reflection, the archbishop said.

The omission brought criticism from many quarters and invited comparisons with similar services in the United States and the United Kingdom that included strong religious components.

Canada boasts of secularism

Canada boasts of its "secularism, pluralism and democracy," Archbishop Peers said, adding that many public officials think that state secularism requires them to purge religious references from public speech.

The country prides itself on its multiculturalism but it is making a mistake if it ignores the faith upon which many of those cultures are based, the archbishop said. "A culture is far more than simply folklore, and that is especially true for people of faith," the primate said.

Lois Wilson, a member of Canada's Senate, and a former moderator of the United Church of Canada (UCC), agreed. "[Officials] seem to think that making no reference at all, particularly to the Christian religion, will [eliminate the risk of] offending somebody," she told ENI.

The service after the terrorist attack on the US was not an isolated event, the senator said, pointing to the memorial service held after the 1998 crash of Swissair flight 111 off the coast of Peggy's Cove in Nova Scotia.

"Christians present [at that memorial service] were instructed not to read Scripture, not to give Christian prayers and not to mention Jesus.

"I think the government is way behind religious communities — they have old stereotypes of religious communities not being able to agree on anything," added Wilson, a former president of the World Council of Churches. "That time is long past. I think the government is running scared — they think that religion is so touchy that they are afraid to touch it."

The Rev. Marion Pardy, the UCC's moderator, told ENI: "I hope it was just insufficient discernment on the part of the planners of that day of mourning [after 11 September] as opposed to a conscientious, intentional goal of not including any reference to the many faith expressions in Canada."

Seeking spiritual resources

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on the U.S., "people in many faith communities and people without any identifiable faith communities were seeking the resources of spirituality," Pardy said.

But a strictly Christian service would not have been appropriate either. "When we enter the public arena, we need to be sensitive to the faith expressions of all faith communities," the pastor added.

Peter Schonenbach, general secretary of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told ENI that religious leaders had a role to play in the democratic process.

But he criticized church representatives for not having given sufficient priority to accepting invitations for public events.

Archbishop Peers concluded his New Year's sermon by saying that Christians had to "engage" in their society, "so that out of what has been this fearful random event of the year past may come, not quickly, probably, but in the long term, in God's time, and maybe even in our time, a more profound connection between faith and society — things that Jesus worked for and we pray for."

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Agriculture

Albertans celebrate 30 years Earthkeeping

PHOTOS COURTESY LINDA SIEBENGA

A lively discussion at Earthkeeping's 30th convention. From left, Dr. Nettie Wiebe, Evert Teklenberg, Jack Siebenga.

Linda Siebenga

ALBERTA — Last December 1, Alberta Earthkeepers gathered together for their latest convention to work on the mandate that God laid out in Genesis to take care of the earth. They also celebrated the 30th year of Earthkeeping (Christian Farmer's Federation of Alberta.) The theme for the day was "Jeremiah Buys a Field" from Jeremiah 32.

In the morning, Dr. Nettie Wiebe spoke on the topic: "Crisis in Farming Today: How Globalization Affects the Local Scene." She also participated in a panel with Dr. Peter Apedaile and Dr. John Wood on "Who is Going to be Keeping the Earth". Moderated by Dr. Harry Cook, the panel challenged people to think about the future of the land.

Statistically, 16,000 of the 38,000 farmers in Alberta are not making their sole living from the land. They fall into categories of retirement, lifestyle, low-income, or small business. The 2000 large farms in Alberta with revenue over $1.5 million are the commodity producers, who have a significant role in the present economic scheme of things. The smaller farmers are losing their ability to compete.

Urban/rural lines blurred

Urban and rural lines have blurred. Formerly, there were city and country people. Now there are city people and people who live in the country. Whatever we may be doing, all people have to learn to live together with the natural creation so that there is a long-term maintenance of biodiversity.

Our well-being is dependent on how wisely we care for the land and the water, whether we own it or have access to it. Rural transition programs are in place to retrain people to get out of farming. We should rather be gathering people together who have had farming experience, to glean information from them about the land, for this could be essential for our collective survival.

To round out the day, Jim Visser gave a report on "The Current State of Agricultural Land Efforts in Alberta", Vern Gleddie recounted the past years in his Earthkeeping Tribute, and Lars Jonsson helped us praise with Jeremiah 32 songs. Pastor Cecil VanNiejenhuis encouraged us on the path where we are joining God in the work he has already begun.

Global trade for traders, not farmers

"Global trade is for global traders, not for those who work the 'back forty'" said Dr. Nettie Wiebe.

Wiebe, the former president of the National Farmer's Union, teaches at St. Andrew's College at the University of Saskatchewan and also farms a 'back forty' with her husband and family. She spoke on the topic, "Crisis in Farming Today: How Globalization Affects the Local Farm Scene."

"We assume that the more trade there is, the more food security there will be in our country," she said. That has not been the case here and is certainly not the case in developing countries.

Since 1989, after NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), agricultural exports have tripled but the statistics show that this trade has not particularly benefited farmers. Farmers are not just suffering from the short-term, unanticipated events like a drought or flood crisis, but they are dealing with problems that have occurred from a planned agenda. Power has moved to the hands of large merging companies, which benefit the company more than the farmer. Co-operatives have unraveled and farmers have lost their voice in the marketplace.

Our only option seems to be to adapt ourselves to the global marketplace. We have tried to adapt nature to this agenda, by trying to get more out of the cows, and more crop from the land.

Companies like Monsanto work on the myth that we have to increase food production to feed the world. This is to justify the push toward Genetically Modified crops. We can become vulnerable to their ads to feed the hungry because it seems like we are doing a good thing, but we must look through the ads with pictures of the guy next door and do a reality check on what is really happening to the ecology, suggested Wiebe.

We need to assess what we are seeing around us. At this point, there is no longer much canola in the West that is totally free of GMOs because of the movement of pollen. Our views of GMOs are simplistic in the face of the complex interrelated systems we are dealing with. Reverence and awe for creation should make us proceed with humility and caution. There is much we don't understand.

Countering globalization

How do we counter globalization trends? More citizens are organizing themselves around countering globalization. They are doing reality checks about the effects of large companies on the well-being of the community. They are aware of the importance of supporting local food production. They are asking questions about globalization: Who is it for? What is it for? On the whole, most people want to do the right thing. We must learn to question and look at different options instead of thinking there is only one option when it comes to the economy, stated Wiebe.

Jeremiah tied right in

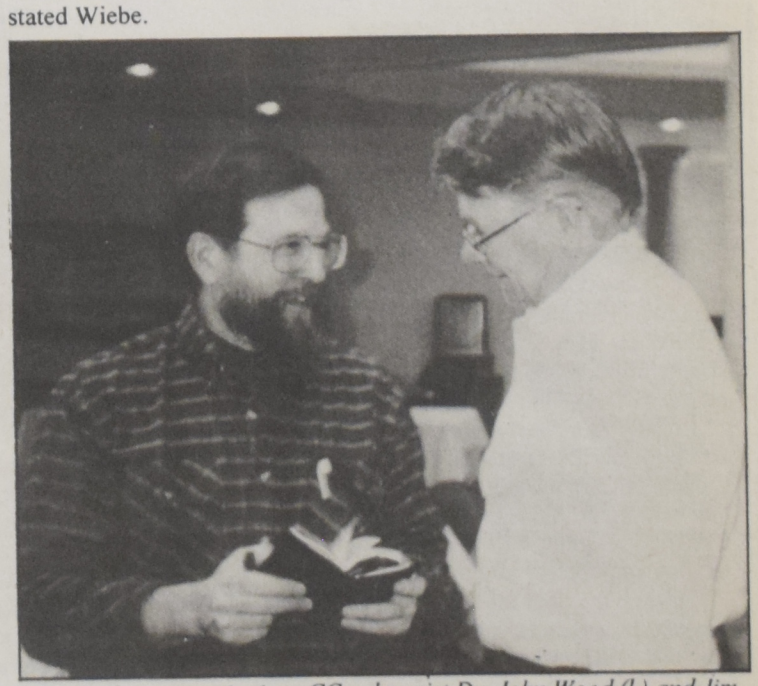
"Jeremiah Buys a Field" was the theme for the convention.

In the spring when we were planning the convention, we thought the world was changing. We thought the farming scene was changing. But at that time, we had no idea of the changes that would take place before this convention. At that time we had little idea how much the passage we had chosen from Jeremiah 32 would apply to today.

This passage speaks of God's overall knowing and care in the face of change. From where Jeremiah was perceiving the world, things looked very uncertain. Not only was he imprisoned in the courtyard in Jerusalem, but the Babylonians were besieging the city. God was telling Jeremiah that the city would be handed over to the Babylonians because the Israelites had gone their own way, done what was right in their own eyes and ignored God and what he knew would be best for them.

The situation was bleak. It was at that point that God told Jeremiah to buy a piece of land. Who would purchase land during a crisis like that? Who would put their money into a piece of property when one's life and future were in such an unsettled state? But this was God's way of saying, "I'm looking at the bigger picture. I know what is ahead and behind. I want you to know that I AM in control. Your families will return to this land."

Thankfully Jeremiah listened. His prayer is a beautiful statement of faith, "Ah, Sovereign Lord you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power. Nothing is too difficult for you."



Two land conservationists: CC columnist Dr. John Wood (l.) and Jim Visser.

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News/Poem

Helping the poor break cycle of hopelessness

OPPORTUNITY INTERNATIONAL PHOTOS

Blanca Rosa Cruz receives Opportunity International's Entrepreneur of the Year award in Toronto.

Margaret Dinsdale

What does $200 get you in Canada? A night out on the town? A minor car repair? A new jacket? While this amount of money doesn't seem to go far in a developed country such as Canada, $200 changed Blanca Rosa Cruz's life and that of her family in Nicaragua.

Through the Christian-based Opportunity International Canada, Blanca received a micro-loan and, instead of working in a bakery for ten hours per day for $35 a week, she set up her own pizza business in her one-room, dirt floor home. Two years later, she bakes 40 loaves of bread and 150 pizzas a day, employs six people, has five rooms in her home with concrete floors and even has a savings account. She was in Canada recently as part of a tour to announce her selection as Entrepreneur of the Year.

Aside from having control over her life, she likes the fact she can help her three children, now in their teens.

"My oldest son has turned 20, and his wife is about to have his first baby," she said. "I couldn't always be there to make sure he went to school and other things, but I can help my grandchild."

Difficult to climb out of poverty

And she can help herself as well. Because there is no medicare system in her country, one of the first things she did was have a gall bladder operation that relieved years of suffering. And after decades of war and chaos and high illiteracy rates, 80 per cent of the people live on less than $3 per day, making it extremely difficult to climb out of the despair of poverty.

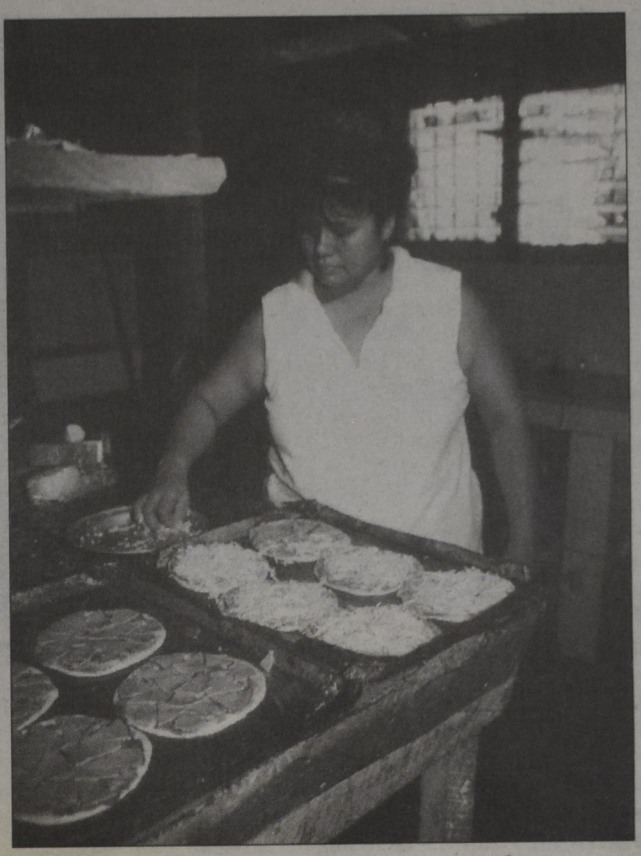
Wayne Johnson, president of Opportunity International Canada, says that though building housing for the poor, supplying fresh water sources and providing health services to the poor are worthy efforts, the people might have a nicer home but are still poor.

"You can give someone a fish every week for the rest of their lives to feed them, or you can give them a hook and line and teach them how to fish," he says. "We give people, who the banks wouldn't consider, loans and support to turn their lives around."

That support includes the creation of a trust bank of 15 to 30 people in a community. Though they each receive their own loan, they are responsible for all the loans in the group. The participants are also offered business skills training. For many it is learning to use a calculator for the first time, and the chance to escape unemployment, loan sharks or exploitative employers.

262,000 clients

The Support Partners are based in Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Australia and New Zealand and provide the tools, such as money, to programs in 32 countries around the world in Central and South America, Eastern Europe, India, Africa and south-east Asian countries. The Canadian organization is focused on programs in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. There are more than 262,000 clients worldwide with an average loan of $298 and a repayment record of 98 per cent. About 85 per cent of loan recipients are women because "women are usually the poorest in poor countries," according to Johnson.



Blanca Rosa Cruz at work in her own pizza business.

Much of the funding in Canada comes from individuals, service groups, churches and corporations with some matching funds coming from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Who's crazy?

"When I first started working for them, I thought they were crazy, giving loans to people who have no credit record or collateral," says Juan Ulloa, director of Opportunity International Nicaragua. He and Blanca Rosa Cruz spoke to *Christian Courier* through an interpreter. "I had worked in banking for 20 years and this was completely opposite to what I had been doing in the banks. Now, I think the banks are crazy." What Juan likes best about his job is that it helps not just the financial lives of people, but their whole lives.

"I thought I was smart before I started working here," he explained. "But now I realize how stupid I am because of all that I have learned through the people we help. People who live in extreme poverty have no hope. Blanca is a good example of the work we do because now she has hope."

And Blanca did not have an easy start in life, quitting school in Grade 4 because, as one of the eldest of ten children, she had to help out at home. From when she was nine till she was 13 she worked at home with her mother. Then she got a job in a bakery to help with household expenses.

"Because I didn't know any better I got married when I was 15," she added. "I thought it would get me out of my situation but it ended up being worse. Before I was sixteen, I had my first child and my husband didn't make much money. And because poor people don't teach their children about sexual education, I had two more children while I was very young."

For seventeen years, Blanca and her husband struggled to raise their children. Many years, the children didn't even know it was Christmas Day. She was frustrated and sad because she didn't want extreme poverty for her children. Then she heard about Opportunity International.

"I couldn't believe anyone would give me a loan without any collateral," she said. "I am thankful to God that they trusted in me and gave me a loan."

Praying and working hard

And her neighborhood loan circle of 19 women and one man had their own troubles with trust at first, trusting each other. They now call their group the Light of Life, Blanca is treasurer and they have "faith in God and work hard; you can't just pray and not work, or work and not pray, you have to do both together." For the past two years, the group has done very well.

Her personal changes are numerous; she can now be at home to help her two younger children get to school and do homework, she can afford the books they need for school, her 15-year-old son was recently baptized, her husband is very proud of her and she is filled with hope for the future.

Nothing left to cling to but the wind

This glorious wind without warning
like a second coming
like the first
rushing wind
without the flaming tongues

yet the sky ablaze
with flamed shades of morning
in the racing clouds
as sun bursts on the horizon

I felt that movement of the wind
that whipping flight of air
sweep clean
the collected stress
while snow sped horizontally across
the field
then turned in turbulent patterns
to scour
to caress the landscape

I let it rock me
cradle me
into that submission
that trusts every condition
into the hands of the Creator
and rocked until there was nothing
left to cling to

but the wind

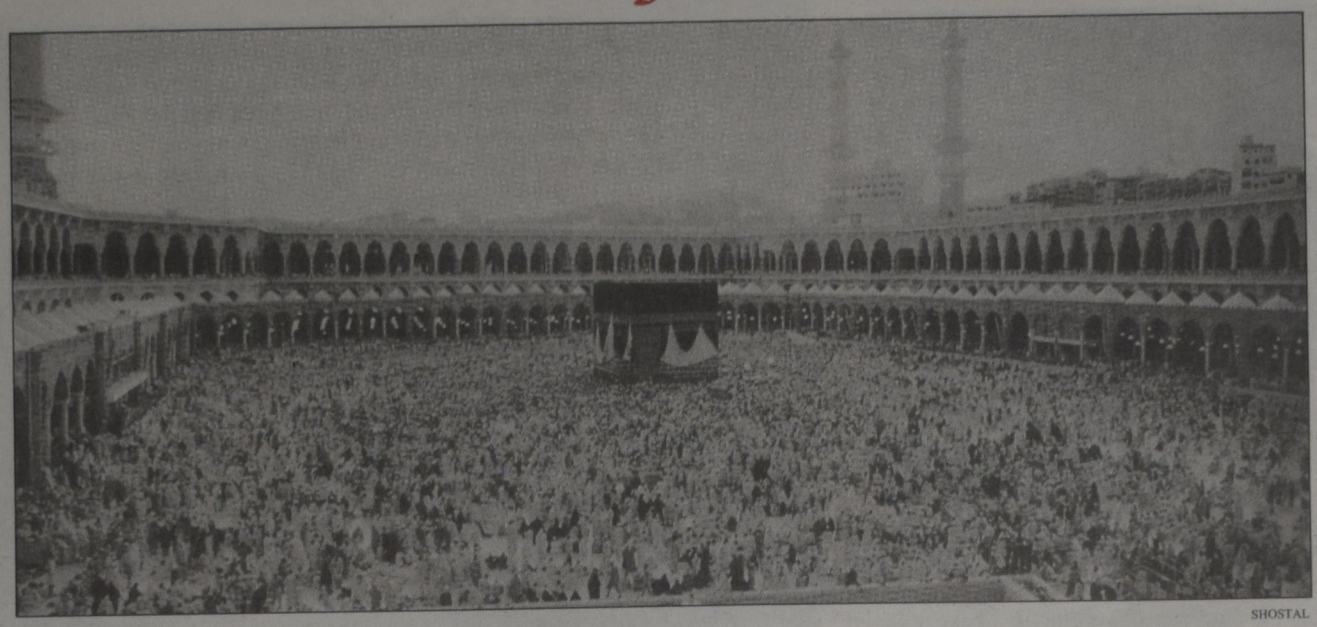
Linda Siebenga
Blackfalds, Alta.

Analysis

Christianity and Islam

Jan A. B. Jongeneel

Mohammed founded Islam about six centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ. This religion developed a doctrine and a way of life that in some respects is in harmony with biblical norms and in others is in sharp disagreement with it. Through the centuries, Christians and Muslims have, separately and together, wrestled with what unites and what divides them.



SHOSTAL

Muslim pilgrims pray at the Kaaba, the holiest shrine in Islam, located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Islamic dream and reality

The dream of every Muslim is that one day the whole earth will be inhabited only by Muslims. Every Jew and every Christian who expects a new heaven and a new earth has a similar dream. Jews, Christians, and Muslims also have a linear view of history in common: world history has a beginning (God as creator) and, therefore, an end.

Islam is a legalistic and political religion. The territory of Islam is that part of the world which is governed by Muslims.

However, the adherents of the three monotheistic religions have very different views about the goal (telos) of world history. The dream of the Muslims is more earthy (or physical) than that of the Jews and the Christians. The Koran speaks about virgins with swelling breasts (Koran 78:33), who will welcome the faithful in paradise where filled cups will be awaiting them (78:34).

A minority of Jews, Christians, and Muslims hold an apocalyptic view of history. One of them is the Muslim 'Ali Akbar, who sincerely believes that he can determine the end of time: the signs of our time make clear that we live in the end of the times. It is his personal conviction that the end time was reached after the Second World War and the establishment of the state of Israel. It was inaugurated by the appearance of both the Anti-Christ (the Western world) and the Old Testament powers Gog and Magog.

Islamic vision of end-time

The Islamic vision of the end-time cannot be separated from the view that Mohammed is the last prophet. Muslims believe that nothing really new can happen after Mohammed. Everything that had to be said to humanity was spoken, once and for all, by God in the Koran. On the one hand, Muslims see events happening which affirm their conviction that with the arrival of Mohammed as prophet the final phase of world history has begun. The number of Muslims in the world continues to increase: the 20th century saw a growth from around 11 per cent (1900) to around 17 per cent (2000) of the world's population (according to David B. Barrett). God also blessed Arabia with much oil, the income of which must be used for the spread of Islam and for the building of mosques everywhere in the world, especially in countries to which Islam has not (yet) or barely spread.

On the other hand, Muslims are frustrated. Every day they see that the people of Israel, upon whom God's wrath rests, and erring Christians take action against "the straight path" (Koran 1:6) of Islam. These 'infidels' do not only take the lead in world politics, science, and technology, but also humiliate Islam by supporting the state of Israel on Islamic territory, by maintaining military bases in Saudi Arabia, the motherland of Islam, and now by making war in Afghanistan. Islamic frustration is also aggravated by the following facts: 'the infidels' do not recognize Mohammed's flight to Medina (hidjra), i.e. the beginning of the Muslim calendar (622), as an/the 'axis' (Karl Jaspers) in world history; nor do they receive with thanks the language of the Koran, Arabic, used by God to reveal himself to humanity, as the world language par excellence.

Most Muslims regard the balance as positive: there are many reasons to deeply thank God for the hundreds of mosques build in Europe after 1945. For a minority, however, the balance is negative. The arrogance of 'the infidels', especially in Israel and in the U.S., borders on the unbelievable. This arrogance is at heart a grave insult to God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

The territory of Islam

Islam is a legalistic and political religion. It makes a distinction between *dar al-islam* (territory/sphere of influence of the Islam) and *dar al-harb* (territory/sphere of influence of the battle). The territory of Islam is that part of the world which is governed by Muslims in accordance with Islamic law (*shari'a*). This territory is where justice comes to the fore (*dar al-adl*).

Unequal rights

Non-Islamic communities living in the territory of Islam are usually offered so-called 'protection' (cf. the position of the Christians in Syria). Further, the so-called 'right of free passage' is given to those non-Muslims from afar who have received permission to settle for a period of time in the territory of Islam. Not only these, but all non-Muslim individuals and communities living in the territory of Islam do not receive the same rights and responsibilities as Muslims.

Over against the territory of Islam is the territory of battle. This is the territory of all those nations which, in spite of the call (*da'wa*) to convert to Islam, are still governed by 'unbelievers.' According to Islamic law, Islam lives in a constant state of war with both the rulers and the population of this territory. This unavoidable war is first of all of a spiritual nature but it can also take on the form of a physical, armed battle. Present examples of the latter kind of war are Nigeria and Sudan in Africa; Kosovo and Chechnya in Europe; and East Indonesia (Ambon, Halmahera, Poso) and the Southern Philippines (Mindanao) in Asia.

Muslims believe that finally the whole territory of battle will be transformed into a territory of Islam. Then the Islamic dream will have become reality. God has indeed a very long breath in world history but one day he will triumph. The faith of the average Christian in the new heaven and the new earth where justice will rule is much more surrounded by profound questions than that of the average Muslim. Muslims are able to draw a straight line from the territory of Islam (corpus Islamicum) to the end of time. Christians, however, no longer have a corpus Christianum (roughly from the conversion of Constantine 325 to the French Revolution 1789) to draw a concrete line to the end of time.

Terrorism and territory

The West has declared Osama bin Laden and his network to be terrorists. This happened before September 11, 2001, but even more so after the reprehensible attacks upon New York and Washington D.C. On the one hand, it is wholly correct to do so; on the other hand, it can be questioned — for two reasons. First, the very selective use of the term "terrorism" by the West. For instance, it calls certain deeds by the Palestinians "terrorist" but not similar deeds by the Israelis. This double standard cannot be justified spiritually and morally. Second, worldwide there are millions of (apocalyptic and fundamentalistic) Muslims who do not see them as terrorists but as the protectors of Islam's territory against the threats and invasion of 'the infidels'. Recall that the distinction between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* dictates that the invasion of 'the infidels' must be fought against with all possible and impossible means. This includes the means used in New York and Washington D.C. (the end justifies the means, especially when the end of times is at stake). After the Western invasion of Afghanistan, they claim to have even more reasons for waging war against 'the infidels': the arrogant brutality of 'the infidels' seems to have no bounds.

Western politics

Before as well as after September 11, leading politicians of the West have not taken into account the Islamic distinction between *dar as-Islam* and *dar al-harb*. Instead of arranging extensive consultations with the Arabic world on how to deal with Osama bin Laden and his network and how to define the crucial role which the Arabic world has to play in the fight against terrorism on Islamic soil, the West answered that brutality with their own 'crusade' (This term was unfortunately used by president Bush in his first reaction to the September 11 events). This failure to cope with the Islamic distinction between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* will lead to more problems in the future.

Western politicians have stated time and time again that they are not fighting Islam as a religion but against terrorism. However, millions of Muslims see this differently. In their view, the West is interfering with matters of *dar al-Islam*, and fighting a serious battle against Islam.

Given the fact that Osama bin Laden and his network regard themselves as Muslims who are defending Islam's territory (*dar al-Islam*) at all costs, other responses need to be explored to the attacks on New York and Washington D.C. than the West has given so far. To be more concrete: the short-term strategy of the West in Afghanistan needs to be replaced, sooner rather than later, with a long-term strategy that, thoroughly and peacefully, deals with all aspects of Islam's pre-modern territorial way of thinking.

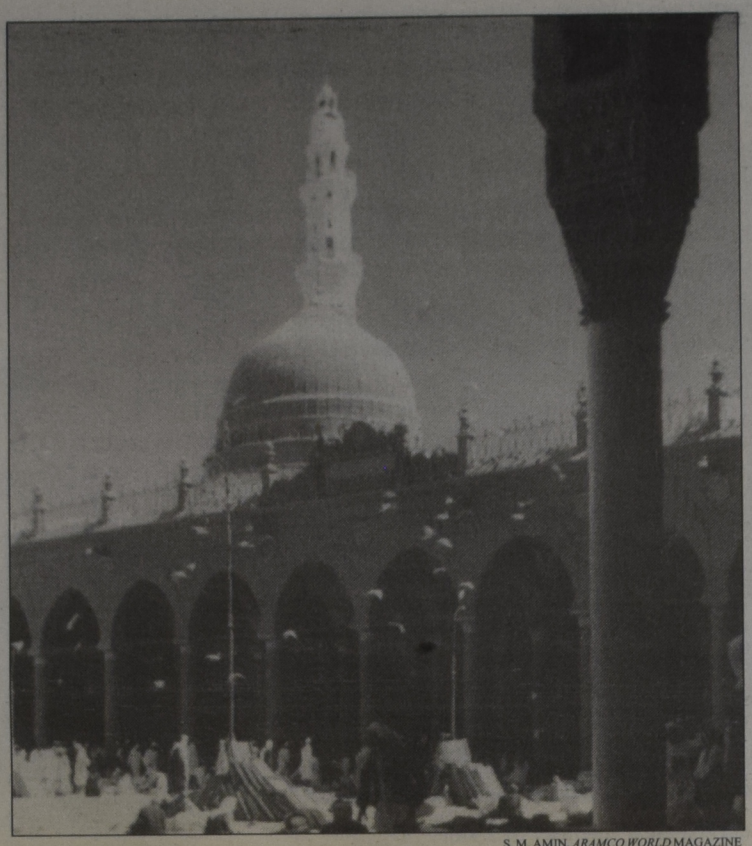
Intensive dialogue with western Muslims needed

This means, in the first place, that the West in its own territory (by Islam called *dar al-harb*) needs to engage in an intensive conversation with all Muslims living here. Western governments need to place the latter before clear choices. The latter may no longer be allowed to pay lip service to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Humanity (1948); Western Muslims need to honor, obey, and apply this document of the United Nations in the same way as other Westerners. This includes both the promotion of freedom of religion, including the right to change religion, and the promotion of other human rights, in their own lives as well as in their contacts with the Arab world.

Secondly, the West must enter into a thorough discussion with Muslims living in the territory of Islam (*dar al-Islam*). At this moment, the West does not have the political courage to enter into a profound discussion concerning the fact that Muslims in the West have all the rights and freedoms that are given to Jews, Christians, humanists, and so on while non-Muslims in Islam's territory are basically second-class citizens. It is extremely sad to see how in this matter the West ignores and even casts aside its own norms and values. It does not seem to be bothered by the fact that Saudi Arabia is, from a religious point of view, the most intolerant nation in the world. In earlier days, Protestants found Paris worthy of a mass; today, Western politicians find the oil of the Arabic world worthy of a sacrifice of religious freedom and other human rights. Western Islamic scholars also close their eyes to the fact that nowhere in Saudi Arabia is a Bible available for sale and that nowhere in that Islamic country par excellence can churches be built or church services be organized for Palestinian, Filipino, African, Korean and Western Christians.

Vulnerability of Christian church

Someone has said that on September 11 the third millennium after Christ began. This is accurate. Since that day, the West, and especially Christianity in the West, must learn to cope with jihad, that is with the non-violent and occasionally also violent battle by Muslims. The goal of their jihad is the full and final victory over 'the infidels,' a victory which is promised by God. The third millennium after Christ will in one way or another become the millennium of the final 'battle' between the two big rival Abrahamic religions — with Israel as the third small 'descendant of Abraham' in the field.



S. M. AMIN, *ARAMCO WORLD* MAGAZINE

The burial place of Mohammed is the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia (above).

Christianity, too, has been guilty of territorial thinking. For centuries, Christianity was characterized by corpus Christianum in the West. There are still Christians, especially in Greece and Scandinavia, who find it difficult to let go of this mindset, but most Christians today do not see this as a disaster but rather as a liberation. They believe that it offers possibilities to rediscover the original Christian identity and vitality. Through its loss of power (since the separation of church and state after the French Revolution), the Christian church in the West slowly has come closer to the position of the vulnerable Christians in the Arab world, who have lived there as a minority throughout the centuries, continuing to proclaim there, in word and deed, Jesus as the suffering servant of the Lord and the Savior, and to practise love based on Christ's reconciliation as well as forgiveness.

Exodus and territorial thinking

Jews, Christians, and Muslims each have their own version of the exodus story in the Old Testament. With Abraham and Moses, they said a definitive farewell to the cyclical way of thinking in Mesopotamia and Egypt and adopted the linear way of reflecting. This new thinking is directed to that great purpose (*telos*) which God himself has set for his whole creation and especially for humanity. However, this final purpose, including the road to this final purpose, is explained differently by Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

The Jews hold the view that the exodus from Egypt is followed by the conquest of 'the holy land' (see Judges). This territorial follow-up of the exodus from Egypt is missing in the New Testament. It is true that the New Testament does give the people of Israel a special position (Romans 9-11), but it doesn't claim territory for either Israel or itself. The state of Israel (1948), therefore, cannot be legitimized on the basis of the New Testament.

Early Christianity also did not claim any territory. Later, the corpus Christanum came into being, but this cannot be understood as a continuation of the New Testament church . As a geographic entity, it is more or less a continuation of 'the Holy land' in the Old Testament.

The Islamic division of the world into *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* is clearly influenced by the Old Testament. It is far from the New Testament perspective. I do not know whether Osama bin Laden has studied the Old Testament texts about the wars of the Lord. But I can place him in the tradition of those prophets and warriors in the Old Testament who connected the name of God with a certain piece of territory and who were prepared to defend this territory to the death.

No Christian holy territory

Christians, especially Protestants, do not regard any piece of territory — not Jerusalem, or Mecca, or Medina, or Rome, or Wittenberg, or Geneva — as holy, i.e. as exclusively connected with the name of God. They sincerely believe that God has connected his holy name with the whole earth. Therefore, Christians stipulate that God can be worshiped in all places without distinction: He solely needs to be adored in spirit and in truth. From this vulnerability of not having an own 'holy land', Christians must place at the discussion table both the questionable Jewish territorial claims (based upon the Old Testament) and the questionable Muslim geographic claims rooted in the distinction between *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* (categories which originate from the time after the codification of the Koran).

Just as God does not speak only Hebrew, or only Greek, or only Arabic, so he does not identify with one piece of land more than another. All kinds of linguistic and territorial thinking on part of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others — wherever they may be in the world and in whatever language they may communicate — must be unmasked theologically as assaults on the transcendence and universality of the one God who is enthroned in heaven, far above all earthly and human delineations. The delimitation of the Almighty God to a certain space (holy places), to certain languages, and certain times (holy times) can at heart be regarded as humanity's original sin in the area of religion and theology.

Faithfulness of God and peace of Christ

The attacks in New York and Washington D.C. are tasking church and theology to return to the fundamentals of the Christian faith: that is the salvific will of God proclaimed through Moses and the prophets and realized in Jesus Christ. A key question for many after September 11, deals with the presence of God in world history. This is basically the old theodicy question: if God is good, where does evil come from? No Jew, Christian, or Muslim can give this question a satisfactory answer. The key question should rather be the following: how must we deal with evil and with disasters? This is the question the Israelites asked in the desert when they experienced disasters after their exodus from Egypt. They asked if it had not been better to stay in Egypt than to perish from hunger and thirst in the desert.

The book of Exodus places us explicitly before the difficult question of God's presence in the desert. It testifies that the faithfulness of God did not change into unfaithfulness towards his people there. Particularly in the desert God did not forsake the work of his hands which he had begun in his covenant with Abraham. Christians, therefore, need to trust in God in every situation and to witness to Muslims in *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* about the non-geographic hope that is within them.

After all, it is not the suffering of September 11 but the resurrection that has the last word — also in Christian-Muslim relations. Jesus Christ, or Isa al-Masih in Arabic, is the God-given foundation upon which Christians and Muslims can meet each other. The Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus calls upon Christians to bless all Muslims, to do them well, and to pray for them. To reward evil with evil may have its roots in the Old Testament and may be justified in the Koran, but it is not legitimized and sanctioned by the New Testament. The New Testament invites Christians, in word and deed, to live 'the peace of Christ (*pax Christi*)' always and everywhere, and to witness to it in all languages of the world which is God's world.

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Black History

A white man's journey into black history

Michael Ireland, Chief Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

MARYLAND (ANS) — In 1997 Joel Freeman, a white man from a small town in Alberta, Canada with a Ph.D. in counseling, who served as mentor/chaplain for the NBA's Washington Wizards (formerly the Bullets) for 19 years ('79-'98), co-authored the book, *Return To Glory: The Powerful Stirring of the Black Man* with Don Griffin, an African-American who has served as a top human resources executive in private industry in the New York City area for a number of years.

The video, *A White Man's Journey into Black History* is the story of Freeman's journey in co-authoring that book. Freeman made this PowerPoint presentation (with video clips) before a group of 700-750 African American men at the First Baptist Church of Glenarden in the Washington, DC area. Several cameras were set up and they decided to edit it down for the 140-minute video. The response has been quite overwhelming, said Freeman.

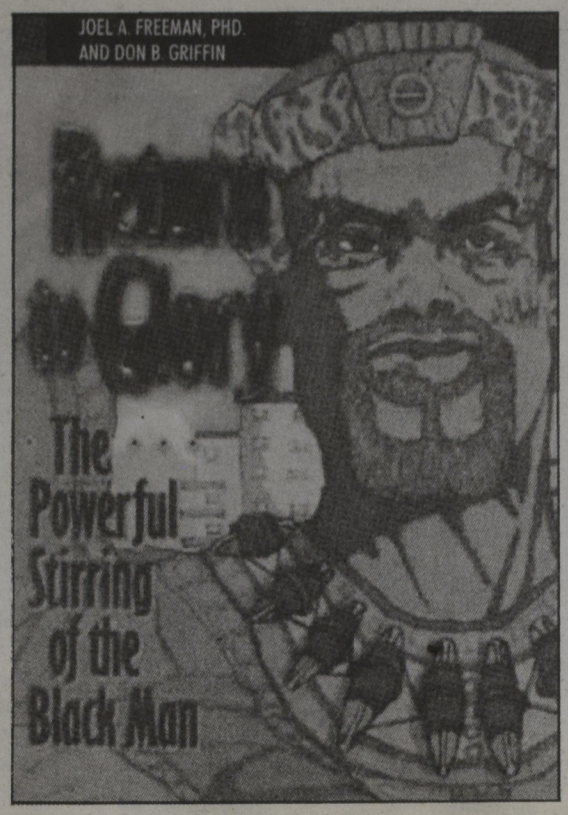
From these stories I began to see a developing theme — each one was struggling through the grieving process.

Michael Ireland: *Why did you co-write the book?*

Joel Freeman: I had pastored for 18 years, with many of those years in Baltimore City. During those early years I didn't have a clue about the effects of racism upon people of color. In 1979 I began to work as the mentor/chaplain for the NBA Washington Bullets/Wizards ('79-'98). Over the years I had many frank discussions with a number of African American pro athletes about some of the subjects mentioned in the book, but I still didn't have a full picture.

In 1993 I left pastoring in the traditional manner, taking my pastor's heart into the business world. In 1994 I started my own company, The Freeman Institute. Our company has three arenas of expertise: executive coaching, long-term organizational culture change and seminar programs addressing diversity, leadership, team-building, and stress management. We work with Heads of State of other countries, corporations, music/entertainment industries, government agencies and faith-based organizations. "Dealing With People Who Drive You Crazy!" is the favorite seminar.

In 1995, as the Human Resources Director of a large milk company near NYC, Don Griffin invited me to facilitate a number of leadership programs. Between sessions, Don and I began to talk about various subjects. Very quickly we both discovered our mutual love for Jesus and great respect for the Bible. Don began to share some insights about Ancient Black History as it relates to the Bible. This was stuff I had never heard before, especially when he shared about a prophecy in Isaiah, directly mentioning people from beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia who were tall, smooth of skin and awesome (to be feared) from the beginning.



Hoping for greater enlightenment

I came home from one of my discussions with Don Griffin and studied some commentaries, hoping for greater enlightenment. But as I got into the original Hebrew, I began to understand what Don had been communicating. It was the Biblical drive that drew me in to the entire topic.

At first I gently challenged Don to write a book about the subject of Return To Glory, but then he thought it would be profitable for a black man and a white man to do this project together, with a special target audience — young African American men ages 12-25.

Don wrote the first half about the historical and biblical perspectives. For the second half I interviewed 40 to 50 African American men, each over the age of 35. I wanted to talk with men who had some perspective.

Each conversation started in a somewhat awkward manner, because it was strange to have a white man from a small town in Canada wanting to co-write a book for young black men. After 20 minutes or so, I would ask a question that seemed to open hearts to such an extent that many conversations ended with tears and hugs — and deep friendships. The question that broke the ice was: "Do you remember The Moment when you realized that because of the color of your skin the rules were somehow different for you in this country?"

This question caused men to pause, sigh and then to embark upon a clear memory of a story of what happened to them when they were 5, 6, or 7 years of age. I was amazed at the clarity with which each could relate to that event. It was a moving experience for me!

My education is in the discipline of counseling and psychological studies. From these stories I began to see a developing theme — each one was struggling through the grieving process. The Moment. Denial. Anger. Bargaining. The Pit of Despair/Depression. Acceptance. The main challenge was "Acceptance". What does that look like or feel like? Is there anyone who has experienced it on a continual basis?

MI: *What is your thesis or main theme?*

JF: *Return to Glory* calls for African Americans to return to their pre-slavery historic greatness. It is written in a reader-friendly format with "time out" questions at each chapter's end for reflection, personal analysis and application for action. Aimed at informing, building self-esteem, and mentoring black young adults as future leaders, *Return to Glory* is believed to be the first such book directed at this important "neglected generation" audience co-authored by a black man and a white man.

***MI**: What are your goals and aims, and what do you hope to achieve through the book and now, the film?*

JF: Our ultimate goal is to get a copy of the video version of this film into every educational institution in America — from middle schools to colleges. Plus we want to make this available to network television stations for airing, possibly during Black History Month. MC Hammer's next album is about Return To Glory. He has already talked with folks like Kirk Franklin, Boyz 2 Men and others about this CD. His stated plan is to time the release of the music CD with the release of the film. [There is] the possibility of MC Hammer, Don and Joel touring together to college campuses with an "infotainment" type of show. A 7-10 minute version of the film will be a very necessary visual part of such an experience.

MI: *How did God prepare you for becoming involved in this subject?*

JF: Pastoring in urban Baltimore definitely helped. Being raised in a small town (pop. 2000) in Alberta caused me to enter into the subject of racism with a relatively blank sheet. Working with many NBA pro athletes over the years has opened my eyes to the effects of racism at all levels. Being raised by wonderful parents who encouraged me to explore and be open to learn new things was a great foundation for today.

MI: *How has researching this topic helped you personally?*

JF: It has caused me to be so much more aware of racism and also has given me a greater appreciation and respect for diversity. Before getting involved in co-writing this book I was afraid of saying something stupid when in the presence of a person of color, so I just kept quiet about certain subjects.

Not anymore! I love risking. If and when I do say something stupid, all I can say is, "You can attack my head, but please don't attack my heart." There is a whole chapter at the end of *Return To Glory* entitled "A Message Especially For White Readers" in which I mention more insights....

MI: *What is God saying to us through dealing with this topic?*

JF: There is an invisible racial barrier that exists among sincere Christians. Thank God for the advancements and awareness that has permeated the Body of Christ as of late, especially through Promise Keepers. I know of white churches and black churches who have done a few Habitat for Humanity projects together, but who still haven't seemed to genuinely crossed that invisible barrier. It is the prayer of Don and me that these book/film/video/CD/music projects will provide another way for folks to understand and respect each other in a greater way to the glory and honor of Jesus Christ.

About Freeman

Joel Freeman is president of The Freeman Institute, an organizational culture change firm based in Severn, Maryland, and facilitates many seminar programs, including the popular "Dealing With People Who Drive You Crazy!", "A White Man's Journey Into Black History", "Diversity: The Value of Mutual Respect" and "When Strangling Someone Is Not An Option." He also coaches executives in their personal/professional lives.

As founder and President of a counseling and Human Resources consulting practice, Griffin has an MA in counseling, and is an historian and popular public speaker. From Easton, Pennsylvania, he brings a wealth of personal experience combined with a unique ability to simplify the complex and communicate with clarity to people of diverse backgrounds.

Essential to help solve racism

According to Assist News, *Return to Glory* is an essential tool for helping solve America's pervasive and vexing problems of racism. Far too few men and boys — both black and white — are aware of the true nature of African-American heritage and of their immense potential for personal greatness in years ahead.

Don Griffin's first half of *Return to Glory* begins by calling the historical "theft" of black historic contributions to civilization "the greatest rip-off of all time" because their true history was, in effect, stolen. He verifies that black Egyptians were the first people to invent science, engineering, and writing and to discover medicine, architecture, astronomy, agriculture, and much more. Yet, the heinous practice of slavery was justified in later years by a massive campaign of fabrications and deceit about black intelligence.

After citing highly credible

Continued on page 15...

A white man's journey into black history

... continued from page 14

"eyewitness" sources such as Herodotus and Diodorus for historical verification of accomplishments by black Africans, Griffin documents how "racism played far too big a role in the writing of black and African history."

In the book's second half, Joel Freeman analyzes and describes destructive effects of racism on both the individual and in the American society. He takes the *Return to Glory* reader through a logical process of addressing racism: recognition, denial, anger, despair, resilience, and finally, developing a personal strategy for overcoming it. He describes and analyzes several experiences of successful African American men who have triumphed over racism by strong faith in God, resolve, education, hard work and family loyalty.

In the final chapter, Freeman suggests that white readers give another copy of *Return to Glory* to a black friend or associate as a statement of willingness to initiate improved understanding, empathy, healing and dialogue.

The book calls for trust in and obedience to God and commitment to spiritual values to enhance self-worth as the first step for a "return to glory" of blacks' splendid and historic past. The book is an excellent mentoring/education tool. The essay contest may be used to provide additional incentive for the educational setting.

A music CD about the book is in pre-production by internationally known entertainer, MC Hammer.

Parents should talk frankly about sex

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Calvin College press release) — Mark Regnerus, director of the Center for Social Research at Calvin College, thinks religious parents need to talk more frankly with their kids about sex. He has come to that conclusion after completing a national study of over 12,000 teens and parents.

ALBERT KOZAK

"Parents who value their faith very much appear at first to talk more about these topics," Regnerus says, "but after I account for the conversations they have about the morality of adolescent sexual behavior, then those relationships disappear. When devoutly religious parents, by several measures, are communicating with their teens about sex, it is primarily values and not information they are conveying."

Alarming lack of communication

And, Regnerus notes, white churchgoing parents displayed even lower patterns of such communication than those of most other races.

The lack of communication, says Regnerus, is alarming.

"Parents everywhere are overestimating what their kids know (about sex)," he says. "They (parents) think teens know a lot, but they really don't when you quiz them (which our data did)."

Using nationally representative data from both parents and their teenagers, Regnerus found that parents who attend church irregularly or not at all are more apt to talk with their kids about both sex and birth control than churchgoing parents.

That's understandable, he says, given religious parents' concerns about adolescent sex — avoiding it remains one of the markers of a "well-lived" adolescence in the Church. But it does children a disservice he believes.

"Adult respondents are not grateful later in life for having learned little to nothing from their parents about what sex means both physically and emotionally," he says. "People whose parents don't talk about it find themselves wishing they had been better informed."

Regnerus notes that these are important discussions not just because of their implications later in life, but also for their impact on the lives of teens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the birth rate among American teens remains the highest of all developed countries, despite recent declines. Teenagers also account for a sizable share of the 15 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases that occur each year in the U.S.

Nigerian death sentence for adultery protested

ROME (Zenit.org) — The Community of Sant'Egidio organized a demonstration in January in front of the Nigerian Embassy to save a young Nigerian woman from stoning.

Safiya Husaini, 30, was condemned to death by stoning for adultery. The sentence was passed by an Islamic court in Sokoto, a northern state of Nigeria.

Sant'Egidio hopes that the "international pressure exerted by political forces and especially by European public opinion will succeed in persuading the Sokoto authorities to commute Safiya's death sentence and that of all those condemned to death."

The young woman was condemned to death last October by a court in Gwadabawa for engaging in premarital relations with a young man of her village.

The man was acquitted for lack of evidence. Safiya was condemned on the evidence of her pregnancy. She gave birth to a daughter a few months ago.

On Nov. 22, following initial international appeals and support, the death penalty was suspended, but not rejected, by the highest Nigerian authorities, who said they were opposed to the sentence.

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

Free at last

I went skiing with my family on Boxing Day. It's an annual tradition that involves the kids heading up the mountain in the morning and then meeting my parents for lunch in the ski hill restaurant. That meant the usual scramble of trying to find equipment and ski clothes. We fought over Dad's blue '60s era hunting hat. Mom's old grey scarf. The ripped ugly brown Vancouver Canucks toque from when I was ten. Anything to stay warm and dry. Of course, nothing matched. My wife Monica's hot pink '80s mittens didn't quite go with her green ski jacket. My dorky, crooked headband and goggles probably wouldn't pass muster in the chalet villages of Austria. The crazy thing is: I didn't care.

There was a time in my life when I cared too much about stuff like that. Only a few years ago, I remember my friend showing me the cool way to carry skis at Whistler. I made sure I followed suit. Besides that, the whole package had to look good—skis, poles, boots, jacket, the works.

Watching the parade of clowns

In many ways, skiing and snowboarding are cocky sports. Sit in a ski lodge some time and watch the parade of clowns waltz in the door. There's a strut that comes partly from the gait-warping properties of ski boots and partly from a "check me out" attitude. For one thing, there's a lot of money you can spend getting dolled up for a day of skiing and no shortage of characters willing to shell it out. As well, there's such a huge range of equipment and clothing that everybody's constantly sizing each other up for approval or condescension or jealousy or whatever.

Like I said, though, I don't really care anymore. It struck me on the way up the mountain this year how liberating that is. Many of us, myself included, have wasted so much time worrying about approval. At the time, it's seemed so important that a bunch of anonymous strangers at the ski hill would think I looked cool and see that I carried my skis the right way. How affirming.

Deep need for approval

How asinine.

I've come to realize how deeply each of us needs approval. There seems to be a vacuum inside our souls that desperately needs to be filled with acceptance. That leads to so many problems when we try to get that acceptance with anything at all, including the superficial. Some become "yes" people to the dumbest ideas, just to please a charismatic leader. Others avoid dealing with confrontation because the other person might criticize them and put a dent in their precious self-esteem. A few find themselves buying a product they don't really like or need because the salesman strokes their ego for a few minutes.

This is where I could offer up a trite little phrase (of which we have thousands) like "God accepts you just the way you are" or "We're all special in our own special way and that's really special," but most of us had a lifetime supply of that in Sunday school.

Instead, I think I'll just offer up a little suggestion. Whenever you make a decision, ask yourself whether it was made to please someone else or to please your Lord. I've been trying to do that, and it's astonishing how often the former's been true. It's the primary struggle of our existence — turning the direction of our heart towards God and away from self-gratification (no matter how fleeting it is).

As for me and my house, we'll be wearing old brown toques and pink mittens next Boxing Day.

Tim Antonides teaches Grade 8 and is a basketball coach at Surrey Christian School in Surrey, B.C.

Fresh resources from Faith Alive

AMAZON.COM

This bestseller by Don Postema is great for small group study, says Faith Alive Christian Resources.

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Faith Alive Christian Resources, a division of the Grand Rapids-based CRC Publications, is offering some last-minute ideas for the upcoming season. With Christmas church activities just behind us, it's easy to be caught off guard when January rolls around, suggests the agency.

For children's ministry

You've probably already purchased your LiFE or Bible Way curriculum for next quarter. But maybe you have some new teachers coming in for the second half of the year, or your current teachers could use a mid-season pick-me-up. Why not hold a workshop? Here are three resources you can use to lead a workshop in your own church. For even more fun, ask a neighboring church to join you: **Basic Lesson Building, Here's LiFE, Setting Boundaries, Showing Love**

For youth ministry

If you're looking for something new to use with your high school classes, try *Why Me? When Life's Not Fair*, the latest in the LifeWise series. This new course helps them deal with issues such as parents' divorce, illness in the family, death, and more.

For adult small groups

Is the busyness of life getting you down? Make space for God in 2002. *Space for God: Study and Practice of Prayer and Spirituality* by Don Postema can help. It's great for small group study. See why it's a bestseller.

For church leadership

Be Still My Soul: Comfort for Those Who Suffer is a new recording that helps bring comfort and encouragement to persons who are going through difficult circumstances and who may be confined to their home or care facility. This makes a thoughtful gift from caring family members. Elders and other caregivers will also find that this makes an appropriate gift for sufferers in their congregation.

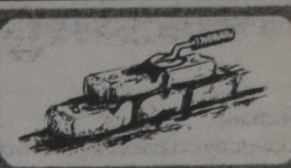
For worship

Sing! A New Creation is a brand-new contemporary hymnal supplement, with more than 270 songs. Check out our website to download a sample that includes a complete list of all 270 song titles. Use the link under "Related Items" to listen to music from *Sing!*

Faith Alive's website is: **http://shop.gospelcom.net/cgi-bin/CRCPublications.storefront/**

Strong woman

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.



Coleen Lynch

When I am an old woman, I am going to be strong. Not the strength of well-muscled, svelte and luscious crones. Nor the strength of vegan devotees of the goddess of wellness. Nor the strength of the high-heeled smashers of invisible glass ceilings. But the strength of one who suffers with grace.

Why would anyone choose suffering willingly? I don't. I won't. Yes, obnoxious martyrs abound. Buoyed up with a false sense of righteousness, they blithely tramp through one self-created crisis to another, boldly moaning where no one has moaned before. Even those who suffer loudly in silence only serve to further the cause of unbalanced fanaticism and end up giving God a bad name.

Suffering with grace

Suffering with grace is different. Much different. Suffering with grace looks like the face, tightened with pain, that smiles with warmth. Suffering with grace looks like the defeated body, polluted with disease, yet radiating an other-worldly skin that is readying itself for the departure of the soul. Suffering with grace looks like the ravages of long days and even longer nights when medicine and meditation cannot work their charms, but hold no power to constrain the triumph of kindness. Suffering with grace looks like the mystery of inner peace when one has every right and opportunity to go justifiably embittered into the dark night of eternity raging against self and the world, but chooses forgiveness instead.

How does one prepare for this kind of old age? How can one prepare to be strong when one is weak with suffering? Suffering itself needs no preparation. It will be there on cue, as surely as it is now in some form, and will be, for the remainder of our earthly existence.

Strength, however, comes from the tiny villages of hope that reside within our being. Throughout our younger years we build a fortress of dignity and well-being with ramparts of diet, exercise and meaningful work. With Herculean efforts to conquer aging, we fortify our body and mind so that the pillaging effects of suffering might be mitigated, lessened or ignored. Maybe yes, maybe no. Even the moat of numbing drugs cannot bar forever the onslaught of the inevitable aches and annoyances of growing old.

Somehow we become strong

And yet somehow or other, we become strong, especially as women. As women age, inner resourcefulness, resilience and renewal herald the truths that beauty is more than skin deep and goodness is the reserve of the wise.

What, then, must we do? What, then, can we do? We choose. The author of the book of Deuteronomy said it well: "Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him and holding fast to him: for that means life to you and length of days..." (Deut. 30:19, 20). No one said old age would be easy, fun or even worthwhile. But it can be all of those things, even momentarily. That is why I want to be strong with grace in spite of the suffering that will come my way.

When I am an old woman, I will be happy being me because I am happy being me now. When I am an old woman, I will love others because I love them now. When I am an old woman I will laugh and cry and say outrageous things because I laugh and cry and say outrageous things now. When I am an old woman, I will suffer with grace because in very little ways I suffer with grace now. When I am an old woman I will be strong because "I am content with a life of weakness, insult, hardship, persecution and distress for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:10).

Coleen Lynch serves as an Anglican priest in Edmonton and is ministering this year as the Women's Reintegration Chaplain helping women leaving federal prison to fit back into society.

Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact Vicky Van Andel via fax at 780-473-0970 or e-mail at: vanandel@oanet.com.

Conference discusses child sex 'terrorism'

CBC News Online staff

YOKOHAMA, Japan — Calling the international child sex trade a form of terrorism, the head of the UN's Children's Fund (UNICEF) kicked off a conference on the issue in December.

The commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children is nothing less than a form of terrorism, said Carol Bellamy, UNICEF chief. Its wanton destruction of young lives and futures must not be tolerated.

Bellamy spoke at the opening of the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Yokohama.

About 3,000 delegates from 138 countries, private organizations and law enforcement agencies gathered to talk about how to free as many as 250 million children from smuggling and prostitution rings.

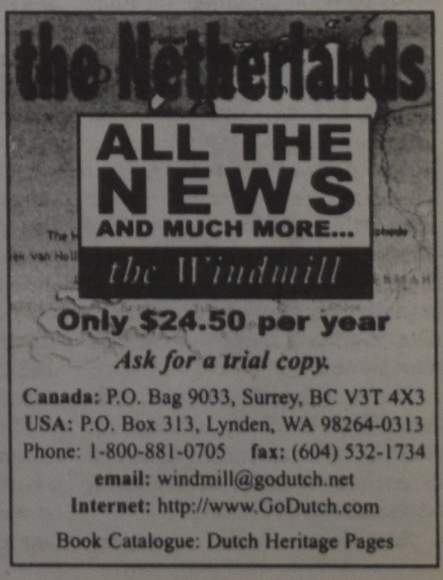
Let us declare to the world our firm resolve to fight against the commercial exploitation of children, said Makiko Tankaka, Japan's foreign minister and conference chair.

There are no official figures on the number of children victimized, but a UNICEF report last week said more than a million children, mostly girls, are sold as sexual slaves every year.

The problem is expanding, fueled by armed conflicts that uproot families and communities, and facilitated by the Internet.

Bellamy asserted that governments need to take more responsibility for punishing people involved. At least 50 nations have enacted tough laws, but she said more needs to be done.

Much of the discussion during the four-day conference focused on progress made since the first congress, held five years ago in Stockholm. Sweden called for national plans of action and the creation of a data base of offenders and children at risk.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Dressing up — and dressing down

Ty Hofman

Few things have changed more radically than the way people dress. There was a time when women all wore dresses or skirts, exclusively. About 50 years ago mothers would brag that their daughters didn't wear "pants." That was only for men and boys. While some girls were doing so, it was a sign of decadence. Farm men had work clothes and Sunday clothes and never went to church without a suit on. They wore the suit coat in hot weather and cold. Each profession had its distinct mode of dress which was like the law of the Medes and Persians—it didn't change. It was said that "clothes make the man!" There was some truth in that concept.

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Though clothes don't "make the man," they say a lot about us as persons. Our dress influences how we see ourselves and how we are received in our daily contact with society.

It's a new day

But it is a new day. It was some time in coming, but it has broken out upon us. Today about the only dress codes that have survived are in structured situations where uniforms are required, like in the military or police ranks, or service industries where employees represent a company, and in some private schools where the wearing of uniforms is thought to help the educational process. And of course, the formal dining room, where you are invited and told it's a black-tie affair, meaning you won't be looked on kindly in street clothes. Maybe the doorman will keep you out on the street.

Some offices are quite traditional in their approach to dress whereas in others informality and dressing down is the order of the day. While most people would do a double take if their lawyer greeted them in shorts on a hot day, it would not be totally impossible.

Don't you touch!

With the demise of dress standards, a lot of things have changed. What we once knew as genuine modesty has really taken a hit. A swimmer wouldn't do too well in a skirt and a blouse of course, so swimming attire ought to be suited to the activity. But the annual swim-suit section of *Sports Illustrated* sends a clear message about the real purpose of modern beach attire. It's strictly designed to elicit a sexual experience. Its wearer begs to be feasted on, to be ogled, and drooled over and lusted after. But don't you touch — unless invited — for if you do, the police will carry you off and you will be designated as a sexual deviate. Such scanty dress prompts the bin Ladens to proclaim the U.S. to be the great Satan.

Now if this assault on modesty could be limited to the beach, we would escape much of its impact, but it is all encompassing. It also comes to church, where modern fashion trends, calculated to be sexually enticing, are rather thoughtlessly adopted.

Miniskirts in church

When miniskirts first hit the scene back in the '70s, some Christian schools tried to stem the tide by requiring a certain skirt length, but the church had no such rules. I recall sitting on the "platform" in the church I was serving while the guest "trio" was performing in front of me. I found myself looking to the side, for while one pair of legs tempted me to sin another aroused pity for the poor soul who had become a victim of a demanding fashion trend. That led me to petition the consistory to require robes for all who performed "special music."

But miniskirts were only the initial skirmish with immodesty. Today it seems to come down to a matter of how much skin can be exposed without catching a death of a cold in winter. The clothing that survives the cut must be totally tight as well as skimpy. Even old men must struggle to keep their minds on worship.

I had an interesting experience as chairman of the arrangements committee for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod which met in Chicago in 1984. The delegates from around the world were eating in the dining hall of Trinity College and the weather was hot. I received a serious complaint from an African delegation that the short shorts being worn by the young women doing the serving were offensive to them. They explained that if these servers went topless they could accept that, but not the short shorts.

While males worshiping in recreational clothes may not be a matter of immodesty, it is not unrelated. I still have a hard time with men taking the offering in baggy shorts. Am I too suspicious in assuming this has something to do with sexual attraction as well? Maybe.

However, good dress is more than just a matter of modesty. It has to do with how we present ourselves to our very diverse world. By the way we dress, we make a statement, however overtly or subtly. Though clothes don't "make the man," they say a lot about us as persons. Our dress influences how we see ourselves and how we are received in our daily contact with society. It also says something of how we regard those with whom we relate and what respect, or lack of it, we have for them.

Key concept of respect

That key concept of respect ties it all together. We ought, out of *respect* for ourselves, for others and for the cause we represent in our world, to dress *respectfully*. We ought not be out to make the latest fashion statement, though some do that. Nor to flaunt our wealth, though some do that. Nor to thumb our noses at convention by outlandish garb, though many do that. Nor to dress exactly like everyone else so we won't be different, though many conform religiously to their peers without concern for the outlandish ways those peers present themselves.

Note, for example, the low-slung, baggy jeans, which are in constant danger of falling down and need to be constantly pulled up: they will probably be the object of ridicule in a few years, but today they seem to have captured a large segment of the young male population. All such aberrations indicate personal failure to catch on to the respect element in our attire.

This trend to conform to the prevailing radical styles seems to overtake every venue and every situation. The youth phenomenon of baseball-style caps, often worn backwards but never removed, not even while eating, is particularly irksome to us old guys who know respect and disrespect when we see it. The story of an AA meeting was revealing to me. The leader called a room of newcomers to order and waited for the young seeking help for their alcoholism to remove their caps. When they didn't, he once again called for order. When that failed, he asked everyone to remove all headgear. Those really seeking help complied; several others got up and left. That story gave me an insight into a key element in the success of AA — *respect*!

Finding the boundaries of conduct

We all expect our youth to experiment in locating the boundaries of conduct in order to create their own space, but we owe them some clear guidance on how to find what is acceptable and what is not. (And that just could involve a ban on tattoos and grotesque body piercing.) It doesn't help when some who are in a position to be role models seem not to have arrived themselves. There are ministers who seem to revel in least common denominator attire in and out of the pulpit, or who dress to make a social statement. It is interesting that while many male preachers try hard to lose their standards, the women clergy are quick to garner respect by wearing the traditional preaching robe in the pulpit. We may yet be saved by our women ministers.

The desire for success

Much surrender of traditions is motivated by the desire for success. So ministers wear strange attire to gain the multitudes, they think. Or hope. But some of the most successful professions pay careful attention to how they dress. The only prominent basketball coach who doesn't wear a suit with shirt and tie is Bobby Knight. Enough said. Check out all the others. Look behind the players' bench at any hockey game and you will find the coach in suit, shirt and tie, sharp as a tack. Why? It's a matter of respect — for the game, for the players, for the public and for himself in his position as the one in charge of the team. His success is tied closely to his keeping respect for his role and his person. The same is true of your doctor. He wears a white coat. It is a medical tradition with import. It speaks of respect and garners respect. A very fine, successful, Christian pediatrician I know, when he lectures young residents always tells them, "Keep the white coat."

Tymen Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

THIS MONTH, AFTER HAVING subscribed to *Time Magazine* for close to 50 years, I let my renewal lapse, replacing it with *Newsweek*. I let *Time* go even though they offered me a free bag if I kept on. I have more bags — including some under my eyes — than I can use. Even though over the years I did get one or two letters published in it, and even though I got a personal call from somewhere in the poor South — or was it New Brunswick? — I did not buy *Time* this time. Perhaps, after having been a *Time* devotee for close to half a century, I expected some free *Time*. But then, that is not how these mags work: So *Time* out.

I know, magazines are in a pickle, CC not excluded: the public is fickle, and the Internet and TV news make it harder to keep subscribers and to attract new ones. Also real readers seem to be dying out. Who still cuddles up with a book and a glass of wine to read, read, read all night? I am actually their ideal prospect: a self-confessed news-freak, an avid reader and able to afford it. I imagine they will soon offer me a real deal, just as Bell Canada did when I quit their long distance plan.

I do subscribe to other periodicals: *The Guardian Weekly* — a good paper. *The Economist* — expensive but valuable enough to keep on renewing. I get the *Christian Courier*, of course. Usually a good read. In monthlies, I get *Le Monde Diplomatique* and also *Harper's* which I find a real buy, one-third of the cost of the *Atlantic* which is substantially the same. Also in my mailbox comes the *Utne Reader* and the *World Watch* magazine. I have lots of air miles collected and my kids in the U.S.A. can use these to buy magazines subscriptions, although I can't in Canada. Too bad because they are a real bargain. The only hard copy newspaper I read — apart from the *Intelligencer*, in which I have a weekly column — is the *Globe and Mail*.

I see the *New York Times* on the web: it is my Home Page so I stay well acquainted with U.S. news. I also get the Paris-based *International Herald Tribune* e-mailed to me each day, as well as three Environmental news gathering organizations. I also occasionally buy the *New York Review of Books* and get it on the web, too.

Somehow, when I survey what goes on in the world, I notice little difference between one paper or another. We do live in a Global Village and everybody prints the same stuff. When in Belleville, I always stop in at Chapters to read Abel Abelson in *Barron's*. In my opinion, he is the most gifted columnist; he and I share the same cynicism and he certainly is not upbeat about the stock market. Of course, he has access to many more sources than I have and also gets paid well into six figures per year to produce his weekly commentary. This well-informed man expects the stock market to see new lows this year, something my readers should take to heart. Stay in cash or bonds is my advice.

IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY, this brings me to "my message for this week," which centers on "living beyond our means."

There is a tremendously high debt out there. I went to the U.S. Census Web site and discovered that as of January 15, 2002, the U.S. population was 285,839,951 people. Their National Debt at that date stood at $6,101,400,393,588 and 14 cents, or $21,345.51 for each of the almost 286 million Americans. But that is not all. *The Wall Street Journal* reported in that same week that corporations owe $4.9 trillion to banks and bondholders, or $17,142.46 per person, and personal debt also is at an all-time high: $7.5 trillion — all in U.S. dollars, of course — or $26,238.46. This totals to $64,726.43 for each American, an unbelievably high amount. I haven't even counted the debt the U.S.A. owes overseas due to its trade imbalance.

All this debt — $250,000 for a family of four — is paid in higher taxes (the national debt), higher prices (the corporate debt), or interest (our personal debt.) Even at a low six per cent this adds $15,000 a year to the average budget. Since there are even some people who have no personal liabilities, this amount is substantially higher for most families.

That we don't give a hoot (I would love to use a more stinky word, but am afraid that the editor might object) about our own future is becoming more and more evident. The level of debt we have is just one indication. An even better measure of our indifference for life is our treatment of the very elements we depend on for daily existence: our environment. The reality is that we are living beyond our means, not only monetarily but physically as well.

Warnings galore, the latest coming from two sources: (1) The World Watch Institute and its "State of the World 2002" and (2) the North American Commission for Environmental Co-operation (CEC), formally released to the three NAFTA governments last week. The World Watch people in Washington complain that since the Rio conference on the Environment in 1992, matters have gone from bad to worse. The NAFTA report says that: "North America is facing a widespread crisis due to its shrinking biodiversity. In the process of finding solutions to our transportation, settlement, energy and other material needs, remaining natural environments have been placed under enormous stress and continue to be fragmented, polluted or damaged in other ways."

WHAT WE ARE REALLY doing is uncreating our world. Example: "North America's diminishing biological diversity has profound consequences. Because the loss is irreversible — species that are lost, are lost forever — the potential impact on the human conditions, on the fabric of the continent's living systems, and on the process of evolution is immense."

The publication warns that natural disasters will become more frequent and more expensive. It reiterated what the 100 Nobel Prize winners said a few weeks ago: that the poor are hit hardest by environmental problems. It points out again that transportation follows an unsustainable trend. (Our population has increased by 50 per cent in the last 30 years while the number of cars and trucks have doubled.) It repeats the warning that soil erosion and the threat of drought are increasing.

With little snow, and high temperatures, especially in the West, this winter is good for heating bills but bad news for the next crop. While the threat of global warming will induce a rise in sea levels which threaten Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, among other areas worldwide.

There is no doubt that we are spending more than we can afford both financially and ecologically. When we give out more than we earn, we go into debt. Prudent people then pare their expenses, live on less and repay their debts. Sometimes bankruptcy is an option, allowing a new start. But Mother Nature can't give us that chance. We can't, at a certain point, tell our Mother to do a rebirthing, to wipe out all pollution and start again from scratch. We only have one planet, and it ought to do us forever. Of course, Christians believe in a new earth, but it seems to me that if we desire to be part of that we must get in training now.

YEARS AGO MY WIFE and I were in Arizona and visited some Hopi Indian settlements and a museum. A statement of Hopi religious leaders says, in part: "Hopi land is held in trust in a spiritual way for the Great Spirit, Massau'u.... This land is like a sacred inner chamber of a church — our Jerusalem. This land was granted to the Hopi by a power greater than man can explain. Title is invested in the whole make-up of Hopi life. Everything is dependent on it. The land is sacred and if the land is abused, the sacredness of Hopi life will disappear and all other life as well."

That is the sort of wisdom we don't find anymore. Not even in most churches. The real question is whether we are on a collective suicide trip.

Not a pleasant thought. But then I don't get paid to spout platitudes and tell you some cautiously optimistic tales, which can be interpreted ambiguously, leaving us free to go our way. I was quite heartened that when David Suzuki spoke at Albert College in Belleville a while ago, there was an overflow crowd, well over a thousand to hear him. There is a willingness out there to go another way.

What we lack is leadership. I wonder how many preachers and church regulars were among these many. Let's hope that the church will see someday that con-serving is an integral part of con-verting. It is striking that the U.S.A., which has a high percentage of 'believers', also has the highest pollution rate and, unlike secular Europe, shows no signs of reducing its greenhouse gases, 25 per cent of the world's total. Perhaps the churches ought to insert an extra line in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins of emission" — something new under the sun, not there 2000 years ago. And then, of course, preach and practise it.

We do well to heed the Hopi prayer that the land is sacred and its warning that, if the land is abused, all life — yes, our own too — will disappear.

Bert Hielema's web site has been updated. His book: **The Eighth Day, Life and Love in the Hereafter,** *has also been revised and is available on* **www.geocities.com/hielemab**

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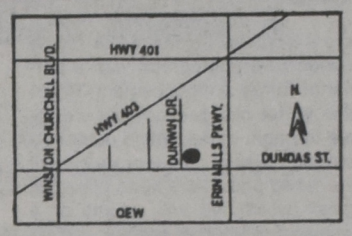

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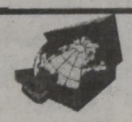

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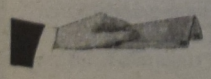

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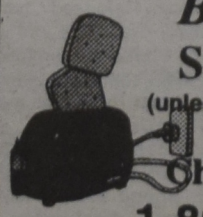

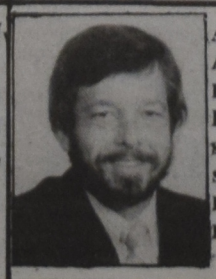

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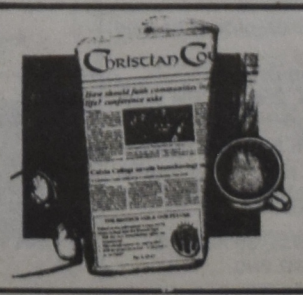

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Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, nine business days prior to publication.

RATES

All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (pci) + GST (columns are two inches wide).
Display advertising re.: businesses and organizations: minimum $18.20 pci + GST, depending on design and frequency.

PHOTOS

There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged pci, but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.

PERSONAL ADS

Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $35. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 pci per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS

We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce the birth of a child in our paper. Please let us know when placing your ad that you want to take advantage of this offer.

SUBMITTING YOUR AD

mail: *Christian Courier*
#4 - 261 Martindale Road
St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1
fax: 905-682-8313
email: ccadpromo@aol.com

OTHER INFORMATION

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format. And editing style.
b) Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

Thank You

Both Cobie and I want to thank you for the many ways in which you expressed your love for us at our 50th wedding anniversary. Your congratulations, your cards and your flowers touched us deeply. We had a wonderful celebration and it was great that you were part of it. Again, thank you very much. May God bless us all in this new year 2002.
Rev. and Mrs. Henry & Cobie De Bolster.

Birth

BREMER (Sikma):
Jonathan & Anita Bremer are pleased to announce the birth of their second daughter

Carleigh Brooke

born on January 4, 2002. A little sister for Cassandra. Carleigh is the second grandchild for John & Margie Sikma of Newcastle, Ont. and is the twelfth grandchild for John Bremer of Burlington, Ont.
Address: PO Box 833, 36 Kelly St., Waterdown, ON L0R 2H0

Birth

FLIKKEMA:
With very thankful hearts we praise God for the gift of two grandchildren:

Isabella Katrina

was born to Paul & Maria Flikkema on December 6, 2001, of Brampton, Ont.

Blake John

was born on January 10, 2002 to Randy & Trisha Flikkema of Abbotsford, B.C., a brother to Hailey.
They are a niece and nephew to uncle and aunt James & Charlene Flikkema and cousins to Julian and Nadine, St. Catharines, Ont.
Humble grandparents Albert & Henny Flikkema, 17 Roxanne Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2M 3G8

Birthday

On February 10, 2002, we hope to celebrate the 85th birthday of our dear mother and Oma

Gesina Aalbers (nee Ter Haar)

May God bless you with many years of good health and happiness.
With much love from your children:
Lisa & Ed Semplonius
Linda & Henk Timmerman
Gary & Rita Aalbers
and 11 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren.
Address: 100 Glen Hill Dr. S., Apt. 310, Whitby, ON L1N 8R4

Anniversary

"My eyes are ever on the Lord."
(Ps.25:15a)

1952 February 21 2002

With thanksgiving to our Lord for His faithfulness, we celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

JAN WILLEM and ADRIANA PENNINGS (nee in't Hout)

Bill & Nancy Pennings — Kitchener, Ont.
Ina & Bernie Pennings — Iona Station, Ont.
Eric & Carla Pennings — Strathroy, Ont.
Linda & Ron McIntyre — Lawrencetown, N.S.
Blessed with 20 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.
Open House at Cornerstone United Reformed Church of London, Ont., 180 Waterloo St. (corner of Waterloo & Grey) on Saturday, February 23, 2002, from 2 - 4 p.m.
Best wishes only please.
Home address: 1613 Scott Ave., London, ON N5W 2J4

Bed & Breakfast

Visiting the Niagara Peninsula? Stay for a night or more at:
"Travellers Home Bed & Breakfast"
2666 Eighth Avenue,
Vineland ON L0R 1S0
Call **905-562-5656** for more info.
All ensuite rooms.
Also motorhome for rent.

To advertise in *Christian Courier*, call our toll-free number: 1-800-969-4838.

Anniversary

1952 February 7 2002

With joy and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for His care over our parents, we are pleased to announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

JOHN and HENDRIKA VANDERZWAAG (nee Vanderlinde)

Hemke & Val VanderZwaag — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Geri & Harold Heerema — Thunder Bay, Ont.
John VanderZwaag — Calgary, Alta.
Rhea & Archie Timmerman — Calgary, Alta.
Linda & Henry Staal — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Herb & Maria VanderZwaag — Cochrane, Alta.
Anita Theriault — Calgary, Alta.
Teresa & Pat Hanna — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Dirk & Rhonda VanderZwaag — Thunder Bay, Ont.
16 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.
We welcome everyone to celebrate this joyous occasion with us at an Open House on February 16, 2002, from 1 - 3 p.m. D.V., at the Fellowship Hall First Christian Reformed Church.
Best wishes only.
Home address: RR 5, Site 1, Comp. 10, Thunder Bay, ON P7C 5M9

Obituary

Oostkapelle, Zld. the Neth. — London, Ont. Canada
Nov. 2, 1913 - Dec. 26, 2001

"For I know that my Redeemer lives."
(Job 19:25)

On Wednesday, December 26, after a brief period of declining health, the Lord took home His child

JANS (JANNETJE) JOOSSE

in Versa Care Nursing Home, at the age of 88.
Predeceased by husband Jan (1987), sons Pieter (1946) and Art (2000).
Dear mother and mother-in-law of:
Joanne Joosse — Ancaster, Ont.
Antonia & Willem VanderHorst — Strathroy, Ont.
Lena & John Pasma — Aylmer, Ont.
Carol & Bill Klyn-Hesselink — Chatham, Ont.
12 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.
A memorial Service was held on Saturday, January 5, 2002, at Bethel Christian Reformed Church, London, Ont. Pastor Eric Groot-Nibbelink conducted the service.
Correspondence address:
Lena Pasma, 50144 Dingle St., RR 1, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R1

Miscellaneous

Money Tips

(NC)—If you're older, your children have grown and you have already built up substantial equity in your home, you may want to free up capital by downsizing. Moving into a smaller, less expensive home will provide additional cash for investment or retirement living expenses.

For financial tips and investment information visit the Investors Group web site at http://www.investorsgroup.com.

- News Canada

Obituaries

The Lord took unto Himself
EVERT JAN (JOHN) LAMMERS
on Friday, December 28, 2001, at his home in Brampton, Ont.
Predeceased by his wife Christina Pennings November 7, 1982.
Dear husband of Miriam.
Dear brother-in-law of:
Henry Pennings — Brampton, Ont.
Bert & Thea Pennings — Carrying Place, Ont.
Dinie & Andy Hogeveen — Waterford, Ont.
Bill Pennings — Sherwood Park, Alta.
Grace & John Smith — Guelph, Ont.
Gary & Corrie Pennings — Campbellville, Ont.
Willie & John Paul — Waterdown, Ont.
Hennie van der Schee — Dundas, Ont.
John & Virginia Pennings — Cambridge, Ont.

Psalm 42

On Wednesday, January 2, 2002, it pleased the Lord to take unto Himself
HILLIGJE (HILDA) SCHOLTENS (Meijer)
in her 84th year.
Much loved wife of Pieter Jan Scholtens for 61 years.
Loved and loving mother of
Liesje (predeceased)
Liz & Albert DeJong — Hamilton, Ont.
Henk & Marike Scholtens — Flamborough, Ont.
Harry & Betty Scholtens — Burlington, Ont.
John & Fanny Scholtens — Langley, B.C.
Ralph & Betty Scholtens — Burlington, Ont.
Jack & Cathy Scholtens — Burlington, Ont.
Jerry & Nellie Scholtens — Langley, B.C.
Anko & Theresa Scholtens — Smithville, Ont.
Trudy & Case DeJonge — Lynden, Ont.
Lidy & Pete De Wit — Thorsby, Alta.
Dear Oma of 56 grandchildren, 36 great-grandchildren (predeceased by one great-granddaughter). Sister of Ralph & Rennie Meijer, Rink Meijer and family of the Netherlands.
A private family memorial service was held in Smith's Funeral Home in Burlington and her body was laid to rest in Waterdown. Donations in memory may be sent to Halton Pro Life, 760 Brant St., Burlington ON L7R 4B7
Thanking God for all he has given us in her as wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, **we are comforted by the assurance and expectation of the resurrection of the dead.**
Correspondence address:
P.J. Scholtens, 914 Gorton Ave., Burlington, ON L7T 1S3

Oude Leije Fr., the Neth — Grimsby, Ont.
March 23, 1917 - January 2, 2002

Our dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather

GERLOF VAN MARRUM

went home to be with his Lord and Saviour in his 85th year, on January 2, 2002 at Shalom Manor.
We will miss him very much but are thankful that he was with us for so many years.
His wife Treintje predeceased him on Sept 8, 1991.
Loving father of:
Frances Crumb — Smithville, Ont.
Clarence Van Marrum — Burlington, Ont.
Frieda & Bill Schurer — Stoney Creek, Ont.
Harry & Annette Van Marrum — St. Anns, Ont.
Annie & Alex Van Rooyen — Woodstock, Ont.
Loved Pake of 18 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.
Will also be missed by his sisters, brother, sisters-in-law and brother-in-law:
Anna & Jan DeJager — Port Rowan, Ont.
Mienka & Willem Pomp — Brampton, Ont.
Louw Van Marrum — Brampton, Ont.
Jeltje Enzlin — Woodstock, Ont.
Dora Van Marrum — Smithville, Ont.
Wiekje Van Marrum — Smithville, Ont.
Wilie Van Marrum — Woodstock, Ont.
Mary Van Marrum — Chatham, Ont.
Zieka & Jan Hoekstra — Friesland, the Neth.
Funeral Service was held Saturday, January 5, at the Smithville Christian Reformed Church, Rev. Henry Vander Beek officiating.

GEERT NORDER

Hoogezand, Gr. — Edmonton, Alta.
October 27, 1914 - December 16, 2001

"For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us."
(Psalm 103: 11,12)

With the assurance of God's grace, in the arms of his beloved daughter, Dad was peacefully taken Home on a beautiful Sunday morning.
Predeceased by his wife, Aaltje, on July 23, 1991.
Dad, Opa, will be greatly missed by:
Doreen & John Stellingwerff — Edmonton, Alta.
Rachel, Erin, Jordan, Emily
Roely & Rien Riedstra — Victoria, B.C.
Bonnie & Ed Medgyes — Nanaimo, B.C.
and their collective children & grandchildren.
In March Dad's life will be celebrated in Victoria, where he will be interred with his beloved Aaltje.
Correspondence address: 16102 — 89th Ave., Edmonton, AB T5R 4R7

Financial Assistance

Those from congregations in **Classis Niagara**, who are planning to or are presently studying for full-time ministry in the Christian Reformed Church as a pastor and/or evangelist and who are in need of **financial assistance for the 2002-2003 academic year**, are invited to contact the secretary of the Student Fund Committee,
Jenny VanderBerg, 1662 Second Ave., RR 3, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9, phone 905-641-1496, fax 905-641-4624. Application form deadline is March 19, 2002.

Psalm 116: 8,9

On January 4, 2002, at Listowel, Ontario

JANE ZANDBERGEN

passed away in her 87th year.
Sadly missed by her husband of 62 years, Geert, and 5 children, 16 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.
Correspondence address:
Dini Hobrink, 257 Union St. E, Listowel, ON N4W 2H1

Classifieds

Obituary

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me: Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."
(Psalm 23:4)

On December 17, 2001, the Lord took home, peacefully,
AART GERRIT VAN ZEGGELAAR
at the age of 97 years. Much loved husband of the late Wilma Van Zeggelaar. Born in the Netherlands on September 30, 1904, Aart immigrated to Canada with his family in May 1948, and settled in the Iron Springs area. Aart lived in Iron Springs, Alberta, until moving into the Pyami Lodge in Picture Butte, August 2000.
Aart was a devoted father, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather of:
Gerda & Nick Wamsteeker — Lethbridge
Henry & Rita Van Zeggelaar — Edmonton
Tressa & Nick Brandhorst — Iron Springs
Gerrit & Kathy Van Zeggelaar — Iron Springs
John & Bertha Van Zeggelaar — Iron Springs
19 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandson.
Aart is also survived by one sister, Allie Vanden Berg of the Netherlands.
He was predeceased by his loving wife Wilma in 1989, a son Walter in 1960, and his sister Bertha and brother Jan of the Netherlands.
Aart was a farmer at heart and a faithful member of Iron Springs Christian Reformed Church. A private Family Graveside Service was held at Archmount Cemetery. A Memorial Service was held on December 21, 2001, in Iron Springs CRC, with Pastor John Noordhof officiating. For those who wish, memorial donations may be made to King's University College, 9125 - 50 St., Edmonton, AB T6B 2H3
Correspondence address: Box 143, Iron Springs, AB T0K 1G0

Obituary

Romans 8:28, 31-39
On January 6, 2002, the Lord called out of our midst our brother-in-law
JACK ROSZELL
in his 65th year.
May the Lord comfort and sustain his dear wife Jean and his children Jacqueline & David Newton, Patricia Roszell, Michael & Liz Roszell.
He will be greatly missed by his four grandchildren.
Pieter & Ytte Feddema
Mrs. Anna Rintjema
Alma & Ray Heeringa
Mrs. Hennie Feddema
Bob & Gerry Feddema
Louise & Jerry Boersma
Edna & Fred Nordeman
Mrs. Margaret Vander Eyk
Tina & Tom Schalk
Tom & Rose Feddema
Charlie & Ellen Feddema
Lukie & Art De Waard
Pete & Pat Feddema
John & Jenny Feddema
and nephews and nieces.

Teachers

JARVIS:
Jarvis District Christian School has a maternity leave opening available at the Intermediate level. JDCS is looking for a **Grade 6 homeroom teacher** with the ability to teach **science, math and art** in **Grades 7 and 8.** This position starts the beginning of April 2002, and continues for the 2002-2003 school year.
Please send your inquiries, letters of application, resume, a brief statement of your philosophy of Christian education and other related information to:
Garry Glasbergen, Principal
Jarvis District Christian School
PO Box 520, Jarvis, ON N0A 1J0
school phone: 519-587-4444
school fax: 519-587-2985
e-mail: jdcs@kwic.com
home: 905-765-7919

Job Opportunities

Second CRC of Brampton is seeking a SENIOR PASTOR

We are a large church in an expanding urban area of 350,000 people, west of Toronto. Second Brampton is a unique congregation with a traditional and a contemporary service every Sunday morning. The Senior Pastor is assisted by a minister of pastoral care and 1 youth director. The pastor we are looking for will be able to inspire our congregation with a reformational vision for service, and will give flexible and open-minded leadership to a multi-cultural congregation with an increasing number of visible minority members. While the first responsibility is preaching, we need a team player who is not afraid to be the captain.
For more information contact: **the Secretary, Search Committee, 310 Mill Street South, Suite 403, Brampton, ON L6Y 3B1, tel. 905-459-3913, fax 905-459-6135, e-mail jlut@sprint.ca**

John Knox Christian School in Oakville

is accepting applications for the following positions:
- **Maternity leave for Grade 3.** Position begins April 15, 2002, and could be extended to include the following school year.
- **Possible full-time junior position** for the 2002-2003 school year.

Ability to teach music would be an asset.
Applicants for both positions must hold a valid teaching certificate and be able to integrate computer technology into the curriculum.
Please send resume including philosophy of Christian education to:
Mrs. L. Keith, Principal
John Knox Christian School
2232 Sheridan Garden Drive,
Oakville, ON L6J 7T1
Fax: 905-829-8056
E-mail: office@jkcs-oakville.org

Miscellaneous

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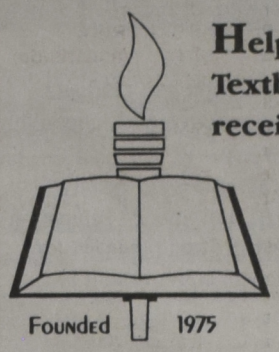

Help the Foundation make leaders through Christian Textbooks. Send in your tax deductible gift now and receive your receipt from our office immediately.

Christian Schools need Christian Textbooks and Teacher Manuals

Help the Foundation with your gift.

For further information contact our Executive Director Fred Vander Velde.

Canadian Christian Education Foundation Inc.
2621 Cavendish Drive, Burlington, ON L7P 3W6
Tel: 905-336-5619 • Fax: 905-336-2376 • E-mail: ccef@netcom.ca

Our Canadian tax deductible registration number is: BN 11883 0207 RR 0001

Job Opportunity

London District Christian Secondary School (LDCSS)
invites applications for a full-time
Development/Promotion Director
to begin August, 2002. Applications from qualified people interested in a part-time position will also be considered.

LDCSS has been providing a Christ-centred high school education in the greater London area since 1965. We serve 340 students with 30 full and part-time staff. Our mission is to provide students with a secondary education that integrates Christian faith, learning, and living, for a life of Christian service.

Responsibilities include:
promotion
recruitment
fundraising
media relations
community development

Qualified applicants will possess:
- a living relationship with Jesus Christ
- love for, knowledge of, and experience with Christian education
- excellent oral and written communication skills
- ability to work in a team
- organizational and leadership abilities
- financial and budgeting skills
- working knowledge of Spread Sheet, Word Processor, and Presentation software packages
- fundraising experience
- knowledge of planned giving programs

Applications will be received in full confidence. Closing date is Monday, February 11, 2002.
A detailed job description is available from the board secretary. Please send a resume and three references to:
Maria Oegema, Board Secretary
10882 Sunset Road, Box 111
Talbotville, ON N0L 2K0
(519) 633-9722
e-mail: oegema@on.aibn.com

Send your anniversary, birthday and other important family notices to: *Christian Courier* at fax #: 905-682-8313 or by e-mail to: ccadpromo@aol.com

7 DAY ALASKA CRUISE
On the Beautiful
LEGEND OF THE SEAS
May 31 to June 7, 2002
Cruise the Inside Passage, Visit Ketchikan, Skagway, Juneau, Sitka, Hubbard Glacier and Seward
PRICE INC. CRUISE, MEALS & RETURN AIRFARE
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For Christian fellowship
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BC. Reg. #981

Inglewood CRC
(formerly Third CRC)
of Edmonton, Alberta
will be celebrating its
50th anniversary
on February 22-24, 2002 D.V.
Join us for **Friday** family night, a commemorative banquet on **Saturday** evening, a celebration worship service on **Sunday** morning at 10:00 a.m. and followed by an organ concert/hymn sing at 4:00 p.m. All former members and friends are invited to attend.
For banquet reservations and more information please call
Coby Benoit at 780-451-5290
or
e-mail:
cbenoit@powersurfr.com

Classifieds

Teachers

CHATHAM, ONT.:
Chatham Christian High School invites teachers, who demonstrate a passionate love for God and young people, to join our team. We are a growing school in a brand new facility, supported by a strong Christian community. We seek applications for **Vice-Principal** as well as teachers with strengths in the following areas: **Physical Education, Math, Science, Business, and Special Education.** Please address your letter of application and resume to:
John Van Pelt, 475 Keil Dr. S, Chatham, ON N7M 6L8
Phone 519-352-4980, fax 519-352-4041;
e-mail: johnvanpelt@chathamchristian.ca

TORONTO, ONT.:
Toronto District Christian High School invites applications from qualified Christian teachers for the following five full-time positions beginning August 1, 2002: **Computer Science, Mathematics, Industrial Arts, Biology, and Science.** For more information check our website: **tdchristian.on.ca** Send resumes to: **siebenga@tdchristian.on.ca** or **Ren Siebenga, Toronto District Christian High School, 377 Woodbridge Ave., Woodbridge, ON L4L 2V7**

PRINCIPAL
Christian elementary school in Lindsay, Ontario, is inviting applications for a possible **teaching principal** opening **commencing August 1, 2002.** School of 131 students and 7 teachers requires a cheerleader with clear statement of faith, teaching certification, some administrative training and experience. School participates in Christian Schools International health and pension benefits program. Stable staff, supportive parents, eager students in the heart of cottage country! Please direct questions and applications to **Hank Ufkes, Board Chair, Heritage Christian School, 159 Colborne St. W., Lindsay, ON K9V 5Z8, e-mail: heritage.lindsay@sympatico.ca**

Miscellaneous

Call *Christian Courier* today to place your family ad: 1-800-969-4838.

The Living Word
Sermons for reading services.
Contact:
CRC
R. Vander Ploeg, Secr./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
Phone: (519) 539-2117

GRONINGERS:
Did you know there is a web-site for you? Check out: **dideldom.com**

Job Opportunities

CALVIN COLLEGE
Is seeking to fill a tenure track position in
Special Education
Beginning Fall Semester 2002

Duties: Teach undergraduate Special Education and graduate Learning Disabilities courses and conduct research and scholarship in the area of special education.

Qualifications: Earned doctorate (or ABD) in Special Education or equivalent; demonstrated effective teaching and potential for scholarly research; P-12 teaching experience; commitment to a Reformed expression of Christian faith.

Application: Interested applicants should forward a letter of application detailing their interest and qualifications and a full curriculum vitae to: Dr. Tom Hoeksema, Chair, Education Department, Calvin College, 3201 Burton SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49546.

Deadline: Screening of applicants will begin by February 15, 2002 and continue until the position is filled. Inquiries regarding the position may be directed to Dr. Hoeksema at 616-957-6212 or hoet@calvin.edu.

Calvin College is a Christian college within the Reformed tradition of Christianity. The college encourages persons with disabilities, women and minority candidates to apply.

DORDT COLLEGE
FACULTY POSITIONS

Dordt College is seeking applications for openings beginning 2002-2003 in the following areas:

Communication
Computer Science
Generalist; computer networking background
Criminal Justice/Sociology
Develop and teach courses in Criminal Justice; teach Sociology courses.
Education (Three positions)
Introduction, upper-level (elementary and secondary methods)
Special education
Foreign Language
Spanish
History (Full-time sabbatical replacement for spring or fall semester 2002-03)
European/American
Physical Science/Astronomy/Earth Science
Social Work
Generalist; micro-practice background; methods courses & field practice

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and a curriculum vitae/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Avenue NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697
Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

Dordt College encourages the nominations and candidacies of women, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

PICTURE THIS!
You can advertise in our Business and Service Directory once a month for only: $25.00 + GST

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
Windsor, Ontario
Is expanding to include Grade 12 in September 2002

Elementary Division
We invite applications for a grade 5, a grade 6 and a grade 8 position. Computer literate teachers trained to teach from a Christian perspective and who demonstrate a vibrant Christian walk are encouraged to contact us.

Secondary Division
Dynamic teachers interested in a growing interdenominational school are invited to apply for a Biology/Chemistry position in grades 11 and 12.

Send applications and complete resume to:
William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
939 Northwood Street, Windsor, ON N9E 2B4
Information: 519-966-7424; fax: 519-966-9519
E-mail: office@maranathachristian.ca

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Victoria, B.C.

Come to the beautiful West Coast and join a dynamic and enthusiastic staff in a thriving, interdenominational Christian school system of nearly 900 students in Pre-school through Grade 12. We require a **Primary (grades K-3) Music and French** teacher (80%) for April 1 through June 30, 2002. This position could continue into the 2002-2003 school year, and could be increased to full-time as of September 2002.

Applicants must be committed Christians and certifiable by the BC College of Teachers. Please forward letter of application, resume, pastor's reference and statement of faith to:

Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal
Pacific Christian School
671 Agnes Street
Victoria, BC V8Z 2E7
Phone: 250-479-9365
Fax: 250-479-3685
E-mail: bhelmus@pacificchristian.ca
Website: www.pacificchristian.ca

Miscellaneous

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E-mail: evlieg-paquette@kingsu.ab.ca or abalzer@kingsu.ab.ca

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Christian University Education
9125 - 50 Street • Edmonton, Alberta • T6B 2H3
(780) 465-3500 • www.kingsu.ab.ca

Events/Advertising

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Feb. 8-10	Ottewell CRC, **Edmonton,** Alta. 40th anniversary. Please call 780-461-4586.
Feb. 15	Chr. Credit Union, **Edmonton,** Alta. 50th Anniversary, Francis Winspear Centre, 780-426-7165 See ad.
Feb. 22-24	50th Anniversary Inglewood CRC, **Edmonton,** Alta. Friday Family Night, Saturday evening Banquet, Sunday 10 a.m. Celebration Worship Service, 4 p.m. Organ concert/Hymn Sing. See ad in this issue.
April 21	**Calgary** 1st CRC 50th Anniv. Former members welcome. For info. 403-243-2244 celebr8fifty@aol.com

Christian Courier **helps Christians across North America apply their living faith to the business of living. Your donation to Reformed Faith Witness supports this ministry. Along with our thanks for your cheque, we'll send you a tax receipt for donations of $10 (Cdn.) or more.**

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KING'S CHRISTIAN COLLEGIATE

King's Christian Collegiate
Teaching Positions for September 2002

- Director of Program
- Director of Guidance
- Instrumental Music
- Women's Phys. Ed.
- Mathematics
- French
- English
- Science
- Geography

Successful applicants will exude a Christian point of view, exhibit confidence and expertise in their subject matter, demonstrate an ability to relate well with young adults, display a keen ability to teach, possess skills for integrating software into their teaching practice and be active participants in the Christian community.

- ***a vision based on eternal values***
- ***clear student performance expectations***
- ***located near major highways and cities***
- ***modern facilities***
- ***competitive salary and benefit package***

Applications may be sent in "Word" format to:
jvanderkooy@kingschristian.net
or, by mail to 528 Burnhamthorpe Road West, Oakville, Ontario L6M 4K6. Although we appreciate the interest expressed by each application, we will only respond to applications who are selected for an interview. Interviews may be conducted by teleconference.

FROM COAST TO COAST

THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

English Radio:
Back to God Hour

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake - CFLO	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni - CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:00 am	1340
Ft. McMurray-CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	8:00 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CHAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Newmarket - CKDX	9:00 am	88.5
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound -CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:30 am	1240
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater -- CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool -- CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
NewGlasgow -CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne -- CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney - CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1

Kid's Corner-Radio
Drayton Valley, AB- CIBW ... 8:30 am-Sunday 92.9fm
Nordegg, AB - CHBW ... 8:30 am-Sunday 93.9fm
Rocky Mtn. House, AB - CHBW ... 8:30 am-Sunday 94.5fm
Prince Rupert, BC - CIAJ ... 10 am-Saturday 100.7fm
Niagara Falls, ON - CJRN ... 7:30am-Sunday 710am

Television:
Primary Focus

ALBERTA
Lethbridge - CJIL
Monday - 10:00 pm
Saturday - 3:00 pm
ONTARIO - CTS
Saturday - 7:30 pm

Check your local listings for cable outlets airing *Primary Focus*.

PACIFIC — B.C. ... 2 pm & 10 pm Sunday.
MOUNTAIN — AB ... 3 pm & 11 pm
CENTRAL — SK & MB ..... 4 pm Sunday & 12 am Monday
EASTERN — ON & QC ... 5 pm Sunday & 1 am Monday
ATLANTIC — NB, NS, PEI ... 6 pm Sunday & 2 am Monday
NFLD ... 6:30 pm Sunday & 2:30 am Monday

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News

Christian agencies campaign for higher age of consent

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — The age of consent for sexual activity in Canada is 14, and has been since 1987. But many politicians and other Canadians are not aware of this and have been surprised to find out. Two Christian agencies are concerned about the effects such a low age of consent can have on the exploitation of young teenagers and are campaigning to raise the age to 18.

The Calgary-based Canada Family Action Coalition (CFAC) is running a campaign to encourage Canada's Justice Minister, Anne McLellan, to raise the age of consent to 18. The Niagara Community Impact Committee (NCIC), which is affiliated with CFAC, is taking part in this campaign by making presentations to local city and town councils in the Niagara region. This is an unusual approach, because only the federal government can make changes to the age of consent.

The campaign is getting results. The mayors of the cities of Welland and Thorold each wrote strongly-worded letters to Canada's justice minister urging an increase in the age of consent.

A brochure published by the Canada Family Action Coalition.

Mayors take action

Mayor Cindy Forster, of Welland, wrote "that Welland City Council was appalled ... to learn that a 1987 federal law was amended to allow consent for sexual activity to be reduced to children at 14 — would be a gross understatement." The council asked for a new law to raise this age limit to 18 years of age:

"We respectfully implore the Government of Canada to now move quickly and amend this law, to begin to make a positive change in an alarmingly growing area of sexual exploitation of children.

"Our children are this nation's greatest natural resource. They deserve to be protected and given the best opportunity to reach their full potential as our future stewards and leaders. Protecting them from sexual exploitation at a most vulnerable stage in their lives is critical in achieving this."

After NCIC's Wheeldon spoke to the Thorold City Council, that city's mayor, Robin Davidson, also responded by writing a letter to Anne McLellan expressing the council's shock and asking the government to raise the legal age of consent to 18 years.

Since September, Wheeldon has been meeting with city and town councils in the Niagara region to discuss the age of consent campaign. Welland council also made a resolution to look at related local bylaws, and make them safer.

At most of her meetings with councils, Wheeldon says the reaction she gets is shock. "It's just disbelief. People say, 'We never knew this. We thought it was 18.'" The campaign is aimed at "making them aware, so they can take responsibility on behalf of communities."

Wheeldon has also been to meetings of church ministers in the region, and says she has gotten little reaction from them.

The lower the age of consent the lower the age of prostitution, explained Wheeldon. The lower age of consent undercuts laws restricting prostitution and pornography under the age of 18, she suggests.

Why now?

Brian Rushveldt, executive director of CFAC, explains why this campaign is underway now, 14 years after the age of consent was changed. Recently, the Supreme Court made a decision to uphold Canada's child pornography law in a court case involving B.C. child pornography collector John Sharpe. But the decision drew attention to the fact that if the age of consent is 14, it's hard to prevent children as young as that age from participating in the creation of child pornography.

"We found that a tremendous number of Canadians were extremely upset" to discover such a low age of consent, explains Rushveldt. Several months ago, CFAC started a campaign to send form letters to Justice Minister McLellan, asking her to raise the age of consent to 18. To date, 350,000 copies of the brochure have been printed, and 50,000 have been filled in and returned to CFAC, as requested. CFAC is planning to collect its form letters from concerned Canadians and send them to McLellan in February.

Three months ago, Canada's provincial justice ministers asked their federal counterpart to increase the age of consent to 16. "She said, Yes, she'd do that," says Rushveldt. Last November, the Canadian Police Association made the same request. But still, the government has taken no action, and CFAC has received no response from McLellan.

COURTESY *THE WELLAND TRIBUNE*

Welland Mayor Cindy Forster

Police concerned

Police are concerned about the age of consent because, says Rushveldt, "they're seeing ... 14-year-old boys or girls coerced to live with an older man. The police can't do anything with that, because there is no law being broken.... We're seeing a move where paedophilia is being normalized."

"Our biggest concern," says Rushveldt, is that our society will become insensitive to and accepting of the current situation. "Socially, it is a very dangerous move, when you allow your children to be victims to predators...."

CFAC's central office is in Calgary. Rushveldt reports that people are speaking about the age of consent issue to municipal councils in Western Canada, as they have in the Niagara region.

News Digest

Tiny beach property

FLORIDA — A Florida-based company is selling affordable, no-maintenance beachfront property, with lots only one inch square. "No, this is not a joke!" declares Florida Micro Beach Property in a December press release.

For $49.95 (U.S.), the company offers a legally deeded property, with a view of Florida sunsets over the Gulf of Mexico, a photograph of the land, a bottle of sand, a sand dollar, and a live miniature palm tree. Says the company, "Admittedly, it's a bit too small to build on or invite many friends over at once. However, it comes with some pretty big bragging rights: 'Yeah, I own a little beachfront property in Florida.'"

Fined for paying taxes

TURATE, Italy (Ananova) — An Italian woman has been fined for paying too much tax. The local authority in Turate sent her a fine worth the equivalent of about $40 for paying an excess of $20.

A spokesman for the municipality of Turate says the government's computerized billing system could only tell if someone didn't pay the correct amount, not whether they paid too much or too little. Maria Clelia Mognoni paid too much property tax and was fined automatically. The spokesman says the fine will be revoked, and the woman will be given back the amount paid in excess.

A true brother

WILTON, Connecticut (AP) — Gary Klahr and Steven Barbin met decades ago and became close friends. Klahr was best man at Barbin's wedding and once signed a photograph: "You are truly my brother."

How truly, they had no idea. A search of adoption records three years ago revealed that Barbin, 49, and Klahr, 52, really are brothers.

Last Christmas, the two men, their families and those of three other siblings they didn't know about until a few years ago celebrated Christmas at Klahr's home in Wilton, Conn.

"Gary and I have always felt a special bond between us," said Barbin. Three years ago, a man in the area contacted state officials seeking information from his adoption file for medical reasons. That man also discovered he was one of nine in a family of 13 whose parents had given them up for adoption. Klahr and Barbin were two of the others.

You are invited to Christian Courier's *Retirement Celebration*

Grace Bowman, our circulation manager, who has been with CC for 20 years, will retire at the end of January. The title 'circulation manager' hardly describes the diversity of tasks Grace has performed for CC over the years with grace, precision and humor. Join us in celebrating Grace's many years of faithful, dedicated service on Saturday, Feb. 2, 2002 in the CC office, at 4-261 Martindale Road, St. Catharines, Ont.

India government launches war on terrorism, missionaries

(Compass) — The Hindu fundamentalist government is planning to introduce two bills that are being condemned as "draconian" by religious minorities in India. The Christian community has taken strong exception to the Foreign Contribution (Management and Control) Bill, which the government says is intended to halt the flow of foreign money to terrorist and missionary organizations.

The new legislation proposes monitoring all who accept foreign contributions and foreign hospitality by making the states a part of the implementation machinery. The All India Christian Council (AICC) has condemned the proposed bill, terming it "anti-poor, anti-Dalit and anti-Christian. Even as the bills are being debated, Christians in the state of Gujarat claim that police and government security agencies have been gathering intelligence on churches, Christian leaders and other local Christian activities.